

# MOTHER INDIA

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SPECIAL ISSUE

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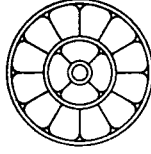
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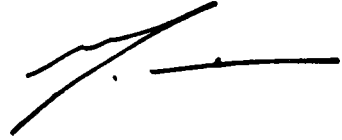
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled



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# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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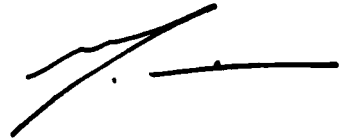


# THE MEANING OF SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTH

## A LETTER OF THE MOTHER

SRI AUROBINDO came upon earth to announce the manifestation of the supramental world and not merely did he announce this manifestation but embodied also in part the supramental force and showed by example what one must do to prepare oneself for manifesting it. The best thing we can do is to study all that he has told us and endeavour to follow his example and prepare ourselves for the new manifestation....

30-1-1972



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## AUGUST 15—SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTHDAY

I THOUGHT of a thousand marvels to implore—  
Yet when I touched Thy mystery's heart, no more  
The lust came crowding: not one plea I bear  
Unto Thy altar as my penury's sign,  
But bring my whole poor self to make it Thine!

Now goldenest boon hangs like a mote of air:  
Deep-sunk in worship, void of puny prayer,  
So large a hush of indigence is mine,  
Nought save that ageless measureless charity—  
Thy utter Self—can slake the abyss of me!

K. D. SETHNA  
(AMAL KIRAN)

## SRI AUROBINDO'S IDEAL AND THE BASIS OF LIFE IN THE ASHRAM

### SOME PASSAGES FROM SRI AUROBINDO

... OUR ideal is a new birth of humanity into the spirit, our life must be a spiritually inspired effort to create a body of action for that great new birth and creation.

A spiritual ideal has always been the characteristic idea and aspiration of India. But the progress of Time and the need of humanity demand a new orientation and another form of that ideal. The old forms and methods are no longer sufficient for the purpose of the Time-Spirit India can no longer fulfil herself on lines that are too narrow for the great steps she has to take in the future. Nor is ours the spirituality of a life that is aged and world-weary and burdened with the sense of the illusion and miserable inutility of all God's mighty creation. Our ideal is not the spirituality that withdraws from life but the conquest of life by the power of the spirit It is to accept the world as an effort of manifestation of the Divine, but also to transform humanity by a greater effort of manifestation than has yet been accomplished, one in which the veil between man and God shall be removed, the divine manhood of which we are capable shall come to birth and our life shall be remoulded in the truth and light and power of the spirit. It is to make of all our action a sacrifice to the master of our action and an expression of the greater self in man and of all life a Yoga.

*(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol 16, p 329)*

\*

.. The object of the yoga is to bring down the supramental consciousness on earth, to fix it there, to create a new race with the principle of the supramental consciousness governing the inner and outer individual and collective life.

*(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol 22, p 14)*

# WHY IS THERE SUFFERING? HOW TO CURE IT?

## THE MOTHER'S ANSWER

FOR a long time quite recently, that is to say, for days together, there was a very acute, very intense, very clear perception that the action of the Force translated itself externally by what we call "suffering" because that is the only kind of vibration which can pull Matter out of its inertia.

The supreme Peace, the supreme Calm are deformed and disfigured into inertia and into *tamas*, and precisely because this was the deformation of true Peace and Calm, there was no reason why it should change! A certain vibration of awakening—of reawakening—was necessary to come out of this *tamas*, that could not pass directly from *tamas* to Peace; something was needed to shake the *tamas*, and that is translated externally by suffering.

I am speaking here of physical suffering, because all the other sufferings—vital, mental, emotional sufferings—are due to a wrong working of the mind, and these... may simply be classed together as Falsehood, that's all. But physical suffering gives me the impression of a child being beaten, because here, in Matter, Falsehood has become ignorance; that is to say, there is no bad will—no bad will is there in Matter, all is inertia and ignorance: complete ignorance of the Truth, ignorance of the Origin, ignorance of the Possibility and ignorance even of what is to be done in order not to suffer physically. This ignorance is everywhere in the cells, and it is only the experience, the experience of what is translated in this rudimentary consciousness as suffering, which can awaken, bring forth the need to know and to cure, and the aspiration to transform oneself.

It has become a certainty, because in all the cells there is born the aspiration, which is becoming more and more intense and which wonders at the resistance, but they have observed that whenever something goes wrong in the working (that is to say, instead of being supple, spontaneous, natural, the working becomes a painful effort, a struggle against something which takes the appearance of a bad will, but is only a reticence that does not understand), at that moment, the intensity of the aspiration, of the call, is tenfold, becomes constant. The difficulty is to remain at that state of intensity. Generally everything falls back, I cannot say into a somnolence, but a kind of relaxation: you take things easy; and it is only when the inner disorder becomes painful that the intensity grows and remains permanent. For hours—hours together—without slackening, the call, the aspiration, the will to be united with the Divine, to become the Divine, is maintained at its maximum. Why? Because there was externally what is called a physical disorder, a suffering. Otherwise, when there is no suffering, from time to time one soars up, then one falls back into a slackening; again another time one soars up once more... there is no end to it.



That lasts eternally. If we want things to go fast (relatively fast according to the rhythm of our life), this smack of the whip is necessary. I am convinced of it, because as soon as you are within your inner being you look upon that with contempt (as regards oneself).

But then, all of a sudden, when there comes this true Compassion of the Divine Love, and when one sees all these things that appear so horrible, so abnormal, so absurd, this great pain which is upon all beings and even upon all things... then there takes birth in this physical being the aspiration to soothe, to cure, to remove that. There is in Love, at its Origin, something which is translated constantly as the intervention of Grace: a force, a sweetness, something like a vibration of solace spread everywhere, but which an illumined consciousness can direct, concentrate on some point. And it is there, there itself that I saw the true use one can make of thought. thought serves as a kind of channel to carry this vibration from place to place, wherever it is necessary. This force, this vibration of sweetness is there in a static way upon the world, pressing in order to be received, but it is an impersonal action. And thought—illumined thought, surrendered thought, thought which is no longer anything but an instrument, which tries no longer to initiate things, which is satisfied with being moved by the higher Consciousness—thought serves as an intermediary to establish a contact, a relation, and to enable this impersonal Force to act wherever it is necessary, upon definite points.

It may be said in an absolute way that an evil always carries its own remedy. One might say that the cure of any suffering coexists with the suffering. So, instead of seeing an evil “useless” and “stupid” as it is generally thought to be, you see that the progress, the evolution which has made the suffering necessary—which is the cause of the suffering and the very reason for its existence—attains the intended result; and at the same time the suffering is cured, for those who are able to open themselves and receive. The three things—suffering as a means of progress, progress, and the cure of suffering—are coexistent, simultaneous, that is to say, they do not follow each other, they are there at the same time.

If, at the moment when the transforming action creates a suffering, there is in that which suffers the necessary aspiration and opening, the remedy also is taken in at the same time, and the effect is total, complete: transformation, with the action necessary to obtain it, and, at the same time, cure of the false sensation produced by the resistance. And the suffering is replaced by... something which is not known upon this earth, but which is akin to joy, well-being, trust and security. It is a supersensation, in a perfect peace, and which is obviously the only thing that can be eternal.

This analysis expresses very imperfectly what one would call the “content” of Ananda.

I believe it is something that has been felt, experienced, partially and in a

very fleeting manner, through all the ages, but which has just begun to concentrate and almost concretise itself upon earth. But physical Matter, in its cellular form, has, one cannot say fear or anxiety, but a kind of apprehension of new vibrations, and this apprehension naturally takes away from the cells their receptivity and assumes the appearance of uneasiness—it is not suffering, but an uneasiness. When, however, this apprehension is counterbalanced and cured by aspiration and the will for total surrender and by the act of total surrender, then this sort of apprehension, having disappeared, becomes a supreme well-being.

All this, they are as though microscopic studies of the phenomena of consciousness, free from mental intervention. The necessity of using words to express oneself brings this mental intervention, but in the experience it does not exist. And it is very interesting, because the pure experience has a content of truth, of reality, which disappears as soon as the mind intervenes. There is a savour of true reality which altogether escapes expression because of that. It is the same difference as between an individual and his portrait, a fact and the story told. It is like that. But it is much more subtle.

And then, to come back to what we were saying just now, when one is conscious of this Force—this Force, this Compassion in its essential reality—and when one sees how it can act through the conscious individual, one has the key to the problem.

*(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol 11, pp 41-44)*

## EXPERIENCES ON THE WAY

### NIRODBARAN'S REPORT

ESHA. Surely you know about the extraordinary event that took place in the Mother's room on the Darshan day of 17th November 1995?

MYSELF. You are no doubt referring to the sudden death of a devotee who had come up for the Darshan? Yes, I have heard all about it. Actually, I was on duty in the room. But the accident occurred just after I had come down after finishing my duty. I narrowly missed it.

ESHA. For several days after the incident I kept thinking about it. I marvelled at how fortunate that sadhak was to have died in such a place and on such a day. And I fervently wished that my life too should end like that.

Then, a few days later, I, along with some friends, went to the Matrimandir in Auroville. As soon as we had taken our seats I felt a quietness pervading the hall. I again fell to musing on the incident and was thinking how lucky that *bhakta* was. I prayed to Sri Aurobindo: "O Lord, there in her room the Mother's Presence is so intense! Please hear me. I wish so much that my life too should end in that wonderful place." At once I heard his reply. "You cannot get that boon. Your line of sadhana is quite different from the Mother's. Everything in your case is woven around Sri Krishna and the consequences of your life are in his hands. You have to pray to him. He is always with you and will listen to you."

When this conversation was taking place I saw Sri Krishna with his blue body standing by my side. My eyes were closed. It gave me a great joy.

That night, at about 9-30 p.m., while I was resting in my room, an orange-grey light, like the ochre of the robe a sannyasin wears, appeared in a corner of my room. It was quite big and luminous. I thought perhaps Vivekananda or some such *mahapurusha* might give darshan. The light moved and slowly came towards me and stopped before my eyes. It was very soothing. A deep voice came from the light and said "Come." "I'm ready," I replied. Then I recalled that I had not yet realised conscious union with Sri Krishna. I said that I could not go with it as yet for that reason. The voice replied, "That is extremely difficult. Your own uncle had to struggle till the end of his life for that." I replied that he who was to give me darshan would decide the time. It is his business. The light disappeared and I saw Sri Krishna standing there, his right hand uplifted in the *abhaya* gesture, symbolising protection.

## LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

### SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

THIS poem of Sri Aurobindo's, "The Sea at Night", runs:

The grey sea creeps half-visible, half-hushed,  
And grasps with its innumerable hands  
These silent walls I see beyond a rough  
Glimmering infinity, I feel the wash  
And hear the sibilation of the waves  
That whisper to each other as they push  
To shoreward side by side,—long lines and dim  
Of movement flecked with quivering spots of foam,  
The quiet welter of a shifting world.

The poem seems a purely descriptive one, but it is as much a description of a presence as of a scene. The first characteristic of the presence is in the phrase: "The grey sea." To Sri Aurobindo the expanse of vast waters has always this mid-colour. The poem preceding the one in hand begins: "O grey wild sea." Ruru, in the narrative *Love and Death*, cries out. "O inarticulate grey ocean." There appears to be a suggestion at once of ancientness and ambiguity at endless work, perhaps a symbolism of the time-process, the agelong span of *samsara*.

Here we have a vague slow presence, a magnitude that "creeps", a strange stealthiness. The pair of designations—"half-visible, half-hushed" is notable for contrasting semi-tones of two different senses: sight and sound. One might ordinarily expect "half-visible, half-veiled" or else "half-audible, half-hushed." But that would have been unnecessary elaboration, for each part of the pair is enough, the other part is inevitably implied. The designations used by Sri Aurobindo conjure up a composite of the unseen and the unheard behind what the senses catch, a double mystery whose partial self-expression is brought before us throughout the brief poem by words addressing both our eye and ear.

There is also the suggestion of the near and the far. "Innumerable hands" come and touch and seize the solid earth that stands immobile in front of the waters: "these silent walls." Immediately after the sea's closeness is vividly brought home we are made aware of what is "beyond"—a glimpse is given of "a rough glimmering infinity." The epithet "rough" is worth considering. We are reminded of the phrase—"thou rude great sea"—in the previous poem. But "rough" here connotes not only the tossing and the violent it connotes also something vague, not clearly etched, a mere outline, as it were. And this corresponds with "glimmering", a light-effect which is not sustained but comes and goes, an alternation of bright and dark which we shall find again in the penultimate line of the poem where we have "flecked with quivering spots of

foam". A further shade of "rough" must be marked. It is a touch-adjective—and what is distant is as if made to prepare the use of "feel" in the next line about "the wash" of the waves at hand. This kind of picture of the far-away becoming the immediately sensed recurs when "long lines and dim/ Of movement" are depicted pushing "shoreward". It is an "infinity" that meets us in finite motions close by.

The sea as a presence and not merely a picture is perhaps rendered most vivid not only when it is endowed with "innumerable hands" but also when it is endowed with a sweep of waves in comradeship, "waves / That whisper to each other as they push / To shoreward side by side". It is a living sea, a multiple oneness, the parts in sympathy and conspiracy with one another, the verb "whisper" implying a secret plan. The sense of secrecy as well as of planning is communicated at the end by the collocation of "quiet" and "welter". The latter word means "general confusion, disorderly mixture", but the former imports a basic control, an underlying purpose. And, like an unobtrusive revelation of the subtle significance of the night-sea, comes the concluding phrase: "a shifting world." The sea at night is disclosed, as though in a whisper like that of its waves, to be a world of constant change through the ages, in which there is apparently a *mélange* of multiplicity yet fundamentally a unity working out a shadowy plan, a unity wide in its scope ("long lines") and reaching out to us from a faintly discerned depth afar which conveys to us an implication of masterful Will and at the same time illumining Knowledge ("a rough / Glimmering infinity").

(11 5 1983)

\*

From my side there is no impressive news to convey. The "voiceless supreme Delight" seems still rather distant, however intensely my "arms" may strain to "take to" it. But its presence out there has become a more demanding loveliness and love—and I pray that if I can't reach up to it sufficiently it may come down towards me a little bit. Perhaps my very feeling that its loveliness and love have grown more demanding is a sign of a movement starting in my direction. Strangely, the reason why this feeling has come about is that, while the Beyond is still apparently afar, the Within has been deepening and widening, and making a move to enfold the outer being and to project itself into it. As the Within is an evolutionary reflex of the changeless Beyond, the latter may be understood as acting indirectly through the former. Hence most likely the perception that the Beyond is commencing to tend Amalwards since Amal cannot make much headway above. But I must say that the Within pushing to become Without is often at once a great joy and a great discomfort. So many things in one's outer nature are unwilling to give up: they want to surrender and yet cling to their own common bitter-sweet.

(2 8.1982)

\*

All of us are full of faults and failures. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother came to us in order to help us outgrow them. Their photos serve to remind us of this. But it is not possible to become different in a short time. That, of course, is no reason to go on encouraging ourselves in our follies. But if circumstances are such that follies can't easily be got over, there is no need to despair or think that one is quite unworthy of the photos. Keep an attitude of devotion to our Gurus, inwardly give to them all your thinkings and doings, however imperfect they may be. Also, try to find within yourself some deep part where you are different from what you ordinarily seem to be. There is certainly such a part which is ever free and ever pure. If you can be aware of it, however faintly, you will surely change and, even if you can't change as much as you may wish, you will not be upset but look ahead to a fairer future.

I don't think you should part with the photos—unless you have a lot of them and you can spare a few. Whoever needs the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's pictures will buy them. They are not so costly that an ordinary person can't afford them. The gesture of giving away your pictures can mean your deliberately cutting yourself off from the spiritual presence. Keep calm, patient and hopeful. The difficulties will slowly disappear. (20.7.1984)

\*

Several of your questions are difficult to answer with any assurance. I don't know enough the details of the divine presence and its working in the elementary domain, whether of cells or of electrons. All I can say is that the one Divine is there though seeming divided. Division itself is an image of the myriad-aspectedness of the Divine who is not a numerical one but an essential one and who therefore retains his oneness in the midst of numerical manyness. The soul-principle, I suppose, is similar. Apparent individuation does not necessarily go beyond the soul-principle's manifold unity: it does not call for the concept of a separate psychic being in each electron. As for cells, human cells are more developed than animal ones but this means that they have more consciousness in them, but I don't know whether we can speak of them each having a psychic being in a rudimentary form.

On the theme of the "Poorna Avatar" (the full Divine Incarnation) I can speak with more confidence. It is the Poorna Avatar who gives us the Poorna Yoga. And what for me is the criterion of recognising the Poorna Avatar? The criterion is the possibility of someone saying, as Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me: "I have no need of either moksha or supramentalisation." Utter fullness of divinity can alone make such a statement. In several pronouncements Sri Aurobindo has joked about himself not being the Avatar. But his reserved yet serious statements have always hinted that he had come to bring down the Supermind.

His supramental Avatarhood, however, does not imply that his outer being at all periods of his life was aware of what his inner divine being was doing. Sri Aurobindo represented an evolution of consciousness—consciousness not only in its old historical form but also in its typical modern shape. At one time he was an agnostic. He has also declared that he had no turn towards spirituality. Such assertions are characteristic of an Avatar embodying the evolutionary process. They don't contradict the fundamental Avataric function. Your notion of a Poorna Avatar coming and acting *incognito* apart from Sri Aurobindo is rather a fantasy. But you have struck upon a certain side of the truth of Sri Aurobindo's own manifestation. He had the habit of working from behind the surface of things and remaining hidden. Evidently he has considerably hidden himself from you if he has left you capable of asking the question about the Poorna Avatar having been somebody else than Sri Aurobindo. (15 8 1984)

\*

I thank you for sending me the April-June 1984 issue of *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society* and am sorry I have not been able so far to reply to you. The article "Rigvedic Aryans" by Dr. Patil and Kumari Laxmi makes an exhaustive attempt to establish its thesis, but most of it strikes me as rather fanciful, being based on similarities of sounds. It is natural that many parts of Eurasia have names somewhat like some words in the Rigveda because the Indo-European languages spread over a large part of it. This does not mean that the Rigveda was composed in different parts of Eurasia. The attempt to identify the river Saraswati with the Jaxartes is not at all convincing. The Jaxartes appears as Ranha in the Avesta and the equivalent of Ranha is Rasa in the Rigveda. The authors claim that the name for the Ural Mountains appears in the RV. What is this name? The word "uru" in the RV means "wide". Why identify its connotation with the Urals? The presence of the Aryans in Central Asia may be maintained but as part of a long belt of ancient Aryanism which extended from the Punjab and Afghanistan right up to the Ukraine and included parts of Iran as well as Central Asia. The authors speak of "black-skinned people" vanquished by the Rigvedics. Once these people are placed in Russia just because the Atka or Akta clans of the RV are identified by the authors with people of the Aktubinsk region of the present day. Black skins in Russia are rather implausible. Such implausibilities come about because scholars have not understood Sri Aurobindo's contention that black and white in the RV are symbolic and that the whole of the RV is a story of inner action, occult and spiritual adventure, cast in the terms of the outer life known in antiquity. And yet Sri Aurobindo's stand is very simple and straightforward. It may be put thus.

(1) There are hymns in which, according to all scholars, the Dasa-Dasyus are supernatural beings.

(2) There are hymns in which one may wonder whether they are supernatural or human.

(3) There are hymns in which some doubt may arise whether supernatural beings are spoken of or natural phenomena described

(4) While supernatural beings are certain in several hymns, there are no hymns in which either humans or natural phenomena are certain

(5) As supernatural beings, who are certain in several hymns, are also present as an equal possibility with humans and natural phenomena, it is logical to think that the Dasa-Dasyus are supernatural everywhere in the R̥gveda

Before anyone writes on the R̥gveda it is imperative to study *The Secret of the Veda*, *The Doctrine of the Mystics* and *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* by Sri Aurobindo.

By the way, Sri Aurobindo also holds that there is no ground to believe that the R̥gvedics entered India at any time close to the composition of the hymns and that, the Dasa-Dasyus being supernatural, the distinction between “Aryan” invaders and “Dravidian” natives of India is fictitious and that one single homogeneous race with local variations inhabited the whole of India, except for a sprinkling of Negrito and Austric elements. Further, Sri Aurobindo’s linguistic studies convinced him that Sanskrit and Tamil are basically sister languages originally derived from a lost common tongue. (21 8.1984)

\*

The state in which you say you are—“physically in inertia, mentally in the doldrums, vitally not interested to do anything”—is nothing unique to you. Most people, at one time or another, are in this state. Even those who take to Yoga are not exempted. Certain transitional points in one’s life find one in such a condition, for one is faced with a crucial choice. What one has to do is not to feel desperate but to call peace into oneself and wait for inner or higher guidance or else turn to somebody who, according to one, can draw some light.

Surely your feeling that you are “alone in this vast universe” is incorrect. You have a good sister and there are friends who care for you and who would like to help you. And the sense of helplessness you have, as if some fate had inexorably cast for you a lot in which pain and suffering were unescapable, is a queer way of feeling the Divine’s hand in your life. The Divine is bent on leading you towards true happiness by evoking the deep soul in you and, if pain and suffering have come, the Divine will take advantage of them to make you wiser and stronger—provided you pray to be shown the blessing hidden in every event, the Divine’s secret hand that can be touched through all circumstances.

The wisdom you have gained through whatever mishaps have come into your life is that the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo is your real refuge. But this essentially means that you must put yourself and your life more and more in the



care of those two divine beings—the Master and his companion, the Mother—whom we have all been so lucky to have come across. It does not always mean that one is ready to live in their Ashram at once. For one thing, it is clear that you have to finish your studies. To give them up after working such a large number of years is folly. Put your whole mind to getting through the coming exams. Dedicate your studies to the Mother. Then, whether you pass or not, the result will go to further the Mother's plan for your life. Most probably you will get through.

Then there is the problem of marriage. The girl your own mother and sister have chosen seems a good girl, though perhaps inclined to be a little moody at times and to pass easily from joy to depression. But I think there is some refinement and sincerity in her. She does not strike me as a bad choice; yet I cannot say that you should jump into marriage in a hurry. You have to ask yourself whether you really want to start a married life with all its responsibilities. You have also to consider how you stand with the rest of the girl's family. Your sister tells me that they are all well-inclined towards you. You have to tell me what is your own impression and feeling. Furthermore, what is the state of your sexual urge? Are you troubled by it a great deal? If you are harassed or distracted by it, marriage will be a help. But this does not imply that you must get married just to get some peace. Liking for the person, the suiting of natures, mutual good will—all these factors are of prime importance. And, of course, there is the question whether the people with whom you will be in contact by marriage will stand in the way of your relationship with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. You have written that the whole family is devoted to them. That is a great advantage. Revolve all these things in your mind. But for the moment don't trouble yourself with the problem. Keep it for the time after you have sat for your exams. Make yourself calm and confident and give up your mood of despair. Learn to smile in the face of apparent difficulties. Every steady smile puts you in touch with something of the sunlit bliss inherent in the soul—the soul which is always the child of the Divine and at the same time a spontaneous sage and a born warrior

(14 9.1984)

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I have quite a heap of letters from you, each opening a gate into gladness in my heart and soul. I mention heart as well as soul because the soul in its human embodiment helps the human to become divine while the heart enables the divine to become human in that embodiment. No doubt, the heart has to be drawn into the soul so that all the emotional being may be purified and illumined. But the soul in which the heart dwells has to be projected if our lives are to be lived in relationship to one another, a relationship in which every one of us as a human being counts. And the dwelling of the emotional nature within

the psychic tends to turn the latter towards the world instead of getting absorbed in a far-off Wonder-World. Of course, the psyche is meant to concern itself with the evolutionary experiment, but there is often a sadness in it at the mess into which it has been thrust and a resultant urge to move away from the bitter taste of the common life and get lost in a golden honey of aloneness with the Alone. To keep the human touch always is particularly helpful in our Yoga, for we have to set the Divine working in each level of existence. The only thing to guard against is the temptation to substitute social sweetness in place of the great cry of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, charged with the soul's radiance and rapture.

A lonely freedom cannot satisfy  
A heart that has grown one with every heart:  
I am a deputy of the aspiring world,  
My spirit's liberty I ask for all.

Indeed, there has to be a transforming of relationships. Not an easy job, since the all-too-human crops up again and again. Even at times one may feel that one can never fight free of it. One feels held down by ages and ages of the ordinary rut and asks: "Is there any hope, any possibility, of change?" Here, as a poet I would say that the soul not only has the stir of such a hope in its inmost being but also finds a visible or audible stimulus to it in what Wordsworth calls "many a secret place" in Nature where the more-than-human suddenly beckons from the apparently less-than-human.

Take for example the response on your part, which you mention, to the early-morning hour. It is typically psychic. The psyche is certainly within the time-process but it is also beyond it because it is the one entity that persists from birth to changeful birth and is not devoured by the forces of mutability.

K. D. SEIHNA  
(AMAL KIRAN)

## LIFE, WORK AND MESSAGE OF SRI AUROBINDO\*

It has rightly been said that the single underlying theme in Sri Aurobindo's striving, in life and in literary works, is the "reconstruction of human thought in terms of the ultimate goal of human life, namely the realisation of the Life Divine."

He was a patriot who believed in Universal Humanism, a poet who had the vision of a seer, and a Yogi who had an inner conviction that human history is poised to enter a new phase, a new age of awakened consciousness. For this reason he wanted all sadhakas to aspire not for achieving "liberation from the Karmic Cordon at the level of the individual," but for the universal realisation of the oversoul.

The 'New Enlightened Age' envisaged by him required a new mode of poetry nearer to a 'dhyana mantra' than to a literary exercise and hence Sri Aurobindo coined the term 'overhead poetry' to connote the outpouring of spiritual experiences from beyond the mental level. A micromodel for Sri Aurobindo's vision of global harmony, a world centre of, to use K. D. Sethna's words, "manifold yet unified existence" is to be found in Auroville.

Four and a half decades ago, on the 5th of December, 1950, Sri Aurobindo left his body. The mysterious turn of events in his life that made him change from a radical writer to a renowned Godman offers an interesting study. Born in Calcutta on August 15, 1872, Sri Aurobindo was sent in his seventh year to England to be educated. Cut off as he was from the cultural moorings of India, he surprised everyone on his return from abroad by his fervent love for his country and its traditions. Despite his success in the I.C.S. competitive examinations and the many prizes he won earlier like the Butterworth Prize in Literature and the Bedford Prize in History, fate made Sri Aurobindo choose teaching as a career and he accepted the post of a College Professor at Baroda. Two totally different occupations, active engagement in politics and spiritual practices like 'stilling the thoughts' under the guidance of Yogi Lele, kept him busy. His articles in *Bhavanī Mandir*, a religio-political journal, attest to his growing sympathy for the Indian freedom fighters, the revolutionaries in particular. While working as the editor of *Bande Mataram*, a respected patriotic journal of the time, he was arrested on suspicion of subversive activities. When awaiting trial at the Alipour gaol, Sri Aurobindo had a mystic vision of God's immanence, a vision referred to by him as 'Narayan Darshan' because everyone in the prison, the criminals, the wardens, the attendants appeared to him as Narayan. During the court-case itself this vision held sway. This is a milestone in his life and marks his transformation from a patriot to a Yogi. Sri Aurobindo retired to Pondicherry, a French settlement at that time, and became the spiritual mentor of

\* Talk broadcast by All India Radio Vishakhapatnam on December 5, 1995

many devotees, the most prominent among them being Madame Mirra Richard, who subsequently began to be universally known as The Mother. On November 24th, 1926, Sri Aurobindo experienced the descent of a higher plane of consciousness into the earth-self. Entrusting the care of the Ashram activities to The Mother he retired into a life of seclusion and silence to bring about still greater descents.

Realisation of the Life Divine here and now can be cited as the central message of Sri Aurobindo's life and works. His approach to human existence is holistic. As pointed out by M. P. Pandit, he encouraged aspirants to develop all their faculties—'psychic, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, aesthetic and volitional'. That is why his path preaches perfection in body, mind, and spirit rather than relinquishing or subordinating the first two to the third. As perfection, by its very definition, implies a transcending and exceeding of the constraints of human limitations, Sri Aurobindo stressed the need for expanding the orbit of consciousness and pointed out that optimal expansion cannot be achieved without the benediction of Divine Grace. His Integral Yoga therefore gives importance to psychic transformation and reconstruction of human thought to be in tune with the New Age, and to be equipped for ascent into the supramental realms. This spiritual practice entails no hard-to-master breathing exercises or body postures. The Integral Yoga is nothing but a conscious surrender of one's whole being to God to be used as His channel. An awakened mind according to Sri Aurobindo will see life not in terms of birth, growth and death but in terms of emergence, progression and perennial renewal. The Aurobindonian path does not depend on traditional meditation and prayer or "Japa". But it does not exclude them. Thus Japa, to be efficacious, should not be mechanical but should always be wafted on the crest of a wave of devotion so that one goes through it not as a chore but as a highly enjoyable and exhilarating experience. A mantra given by Sri Aurobindo to a disciple to be internally chanted every wakeful moment bears on the Divine Mother's aspect of supreme Bliss, Consciousness and Existence: "Om Anandamayī, Chaitanyamayī, Satyamayī Parame."

In the Sri Aurobindo Ashram aspirants are taught that work is the best form of prayer and that the Ashramites should take active part in its diverse spiritual, educational, cultural and physical activities. The only difference between the work undertaken in the Ashram and the work in the outside world is to be found in the attitude of the workers. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are of the view that yogic work should be preceded by rejection of self-interest, renunciation of attachments and preferences, and expulsion of the ego, and that instead of working in an atmosphere of competition and rivalry, Ashramites should work in an atmosphere of co-operation and collaboration. One more unique feature of the Aurobindonian path is the scope given to retain individual traits even while working as a group since 'divinisation', the pivotal principle of Integral Yoga,

will anyway bring about the required change in the psychic, mental and spiritual planes

The early works of Sri Aurobindo show the influence of Miltonic diction and the emotional intensity of the romantic poets. But his later works are, to use the words of Prof. Raghavacharyulu, “experiments in multivalent modalities of consciousness on several planes.” Besides numerous translations from Sanskrit like Kalidasa’s *Vikramorvasiyam* under the title *The Hero and the Nymph*, he wrote five blank verse plays: *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Vasavadutta*, *Rodogune*, *The Viziers of Bassora* and *Eric*. Based on myths or legends from different countries, all these plays have one common theme—the triumph of love. He produced a formidable bulk of poems ranging from epics to lyrics to verse narratives. Whether it is in the longer poems like “Ahana” or the shorter ones like “The Rose of God” or “Thought the Paraclete,” the poetic focus is invariably on the inscape of the human consciousness in its ascent to the supramental realm.

Sri Aurobindo’s magnum opus *Savitri* is almost twice as long as *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* put together, and runs into nearly 24,000 lines. Sri Aurobindo devoted fifty years to finalise its draft for publication. In the original Mahabharata legend Savitri fights with Yama and succeeds in restoring life to her husband Satyavan. Her power is shown to be the power of chastity and purity of mind. Sri Aurobindo adds a metaphysical dimension to this story. The fight with Yama or Death is shown as a fight with the forces of nescience like ignorance, darkness, illusion, etc. Aswapaty’s tapasya constitutes a major part of the epic and Savitri’s birth, described as the sequel of his prayer to the Divine Mother of the Universe to descend into human form, gives the first hint that she is not the protagonist in this drama of struggle with Death but the Goddess herself come to redeem humanity from the clutches of ignorance. Asked about the genesis of *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo remarked: “What I wrote was the work of intuition and inspiration working on the basis of my spiritual experience.” Sri Aurobindo’s use of the title “Symbol Dawn” to signify the birth of Savitri makes it clear that she is intended to symbolise the principle of ‘activating’. As the ‘quickening’ is in the inner or deeper fields of consciousness, she can be taken as the embodiment of the Divine. It is for this reason that she is never shown shedding tears or losing her spiritual mettle. The chaste wife is also the champion and saviour of humanity:

Love in her was wider than the universe,  
The whole world could take refuge in her single heart.. .  
At once she was the stillness and the word,  
A continent of self-diffusing peace,  
An ocean of untrembling virgin fire:  
The strength, the silence of the gods were hers.

The opening canto of *Savitri* may be taken as an illustrative instance of

overhead poetry. The Herculean feat of suggesting a cluster of highly complex yet interrelated themes is performed here by Sri Aurobindo through the impressionistic use of a single dominant image—Dawn. The first stirring of life in the depths of nescience is aptly likened to a sleeping woman's waking up slowly, and the disappearance of darkness at the touch of dawn is compared to the awakening of earth-consciousness. Savitri's getting up on the fateful day when Satyavan was doomed to die had to be presented as a totally different process from that of waking up from the inactivity of ordinary sleep. Savitri's sleep had to be portrayed not as a tamasic inertia but as a Samadhi state of beatific absorption in the inner self, divine in its eternal knowledge and eternal love. Waking up in her case had therefore to be shown as a 'fall', because, it is an awakening into the limitations of Time from the bliss of timelessness. The same physical process of awakening had to be correctly described in its human and divine contexts, and Sri Aurobindo could meet that challenge only through overhead poetry. Interestingly, nescience in this poem is introduced not as anti-Divine but as a catalyst for expansion into divinity.

The fusion of Vedic wisdom with images based on the latest scientific and technological advances lends the poem a unique appeal. For instance, the first breaking of dawn is described by using analogues from modern warfare like the fighter planes dropping 'flares' to light up the targets to be bombed:

Almost that day the epiphany was disclosed  
Of which our thoughts and hopes are signal flares...

Sri Aurobindo used to say that real poetry, which is, in the final analysis, nothing but an inward vision, has to be expressed only through "inevitable words" and "inspired" phrases. As aptly pointed out by Prof. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Savitri* belongs to the class of overhead poetry which, as 'mystic incantation allied to prayer', appeals directly to the soul, as the tune of a song strikes the ear, or light falls on an object, before the intellect can supervene to dissociate the images, anatomise the sentences, or exercise itself in semantics. Sri Aurobindo in his *Savitri* fully succeeded in creating, in the words of A. B. Purani, "a poetic mould equally massive and multiform" to convey the truth that the totality of human life is nothing but the working out of a higher purpose, a supreme will.

T. PADMA

(Courtesy AIR, Vishakhapatnam)

## MUSINGS ON *PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS*

(Continued from the issue of July 1996)

### *Ah! to Rest*

EVERESTS are only for the few lion-hearted, for most the narrow safe footpaths of life are sufficiently wide to satisfy their sense of adventure. Too much of daylight our human hearts cannot bear. Nights we need to rest our overstretched capacities, our frayed nerves, our tired feet.

Even the brave and the elite get daunted by the never-ending crags and chasms and snow-clad pinnacles serrated against the sky. "Demand not too much effort of us," sometimes cry even the leonine souls. But adamant is our Lord and Master, bronze are his decrees. We can never be allowed to rest even at the top of an Everest. New feats will be imagined, new fences will be erected, new arenas constructed, new valleys of death to ride in created, a hundred new decrees issued by the Master against our complacency. The Lord has put a divine discontent and a daring spirit into us and, once something has been achieved, it no more thrills the true adventurer-soul.

The stars, the sun, the moon or the winds, the rivers or the oceans never seek to stop or ask for rest. Why then do only we humans become short of breath so easily? Why do we fall out of step with our ever-soaring aspirations? The Lord has put a quenchless will for progress in the secret recesses of our soul. When our feet falter, we must open the hidden inner doors and contact that inexhaustible Source of Energy—our secret soul.

On the spiritual path, there is another and graver danger than that of tiredness or lack of will and that is of self-satisfaction. The sense of having arrived, of having attained the goal, the summit—is a lethal trap. In the march towards the Infinite there may be distinguished landmarks but never an end. How can there be an end of the Infinite and the Eternal? Can any star claim to be the highest or brightest? No, each is eclipsed by another greater one. On January 8, 1914, in her *Prayers and Meditations*, the Mother has warned us of this peril:

Let us shun the paths that are too easy and ask no effort, the paths which give us the illusion of having reached our goal; let us shun that negligence which opens the door to every downfall, that complacent self-admiration which leads to every abyss. Let us understand that however great may have been our efforts, our struggles, even our victories, compared with the distance yet to be travelled, the one we have already covered is nothing, and that all are equal—infinite grains of dust or identical stars—before Eternity.

O heart! be at peace. You always suffered from the sense of not having arrived, of always being on the path, of attaining nothing, of being nothing, of Infinity stretching infinitely before you, of Eternity overwhelming you. You looked with awe at all the self-satisfied people, who claim to know everything, and make out that they have achieved and realised the Lord. Your sense of inadequacy is the boon of your Supreme Lover who has hidden the summits from your sight, who always shows you mercilessly your million and one imperfections, who tantalises you with fleeting glimpses of himself, thus keeping you ever thirsty, ever unfulfilled.

But the Mother does not leave us in a vacuum. She assures us,

But Thou art the conqueror of all obstacles, the Light that illumines all ignorance, the Love that vanquishes all pride. And no error can persist in front of Thee.

Upheld by her assurance, we can walk with a great measure of confidence and support on the perilous paths leading towards the Supreme.

A day, a stage will come when all our inadequacies will be vanquished, for Sri Aurobindo assures us:

But this is only Matter's first self-view,  
A scale and series in the Ignorance  
This is not all we are or all our world.  
Our greater self of knowledge waits for us,  
A supreme light in the truth-conscious Vast:  
It sees from summits beyond thinking mind,  
It moves in a splendid air transcending life.  
It shall descend and make earth's life divine.  
Truth made the world, not a blind Nature-Force.  
For here are not our large diviner heights,  
Our summits in the superconscient's blaze  
Are glorious with the very face of God.

(*Savitri*, Book 7, Canto 2, p. 484)

Let us then take courage and walk forward with humility and confidence.

### *Unknown*

The Divine cannot be ever known by anyone in Its entirety, even in knowledge by identity. Because howsoever great a recipient may be, even though he be the greatest of the Avatars, he can be only a part of the Divine Whole. The Divine is



not something shut and tight, a formula, a mould, a rigidity, a finished product, a fully grown entity. There is no beginning, no end, no limits to It. It can expand itself as countless universes; It can become a cypher, unmanifest or unknown. Who can limit the Limitless in the bounds of one personality, howsoever vast or even universalised one may be? Even if one condensed all the systems of religion and spirituality in one Adhara, as Sri Ramakrishna did, even if one were to storm the kingdom of God as he did, yet one would be only a part of the power of the Divine.

On January 9, 1914, in a rather challenging prayer the Mother wrote:

Lord, incomprehensible reality, Thou who ever fleest before our conquest, effective though it may be, Thou who shalt always be the Unknown despite all that we shall learn to know of Thee, despite all that we shall ravish from Thy eternal mystery, we would go forward, making a complete and constant effort, combining all the multiple paths leading to Thee, go forward like a rising, indomitable tide, breaking down all obstacles, crossing every barrier, lifting up every veil, scattering all clouds, piercing through all darkness, go forward towards Thee, ever to Thee, in a movement so powerful, so irresistible that a whole multitude may be drawn in our wake, and the earth, conscious of Thy new and eternal Presence, understand at last its true purpose, and live in the harmony and peace of thy sovereign realisation.

The *prayer* is challenging in the sense that at the beginning the Mother posits that the Lord *ever flees before our conquest* and is the Unknown and the Unknowable, yet in the later part of this sentence she clearly indicates that a very significant advance has been made. A stage has been reached, where like a torrent combining all the previous *multiple paths leading to Him*, she is ready to breach the last bastions of Ignorance. It is the Supreme Tapaswini who has mastered all the occult and spiritual Truths, who has touched and entered the Supermind itself and who is now poised to lead forward the earth from darkness to light, from its millennial meanderings to its destiny of a straight ascent towards the pinnacles of Divine Life.

These are the words of the Shakti of the worlds who is ready to break down and storm and annihilate all that sustains Ignorance. She is the Sun who has decided to do away and make redundant all the earthen lamps of devotion and knowledge used as aids by the initiates throughout the ages. She is an avalanche, ready to swamp with her dazzling Light and irresistible Force the dark gulfs of the Inconscient. She is preparing to be the World Leader, ready to draw a whole multitude in her wake.

The world has to be ready to follow in her luminous footsteps. The gods have waited long enough and will wait no longer. The Divine's decree is

irresistible and the earth will have to realise its Destiny.

On the pathway towards the earth's golden future the Mother invokes the Supreme Lord,

Teach us always more,  
Give us more light,  
Dispel our ignorance,  
Illumine our minds,  
Transfigure our hearts,  
And give us the Love that never runs dry, and makes  
Thy sweet law flower in every being.  
We are Thine for all Eternity.

This is her *prayer* on our behalf. Let us be worthy of her and owe supreme allegiance to her who has dared all and prepared all.

### *Ever More*

To search for and find and then unite with the Divine has been the eternal aspiration of the pure souls. Millions have been the ways through which the seekers have tried to seize their Lord. Some have tortured their flesh, some have starved themselves, others gone in for the hairshirt, the bed of nails, the five fires, the hut in the forest, the lonely mountain peak, the burning desert—the seekers have tried in various locations and varied ways to know the Unknowable.

The Divine sometimes laughs at our too earnest or blind efforts and sometimes he chooses to reveal some aspect or some facet to the aspiring soul. But to know him in his totality is impossible for even the greatest or highest aspirant. The reason is not far to seek. The Divine is beyond any limit of Time, Space or Manifestation. The more we know him the more there is left to know. Each discovery of the Divine makes us capable of knowing some more of him and the endless quest goes on life after life in this world. The horizon expands and new aspects and *swaroops* of the Lord await us. The Totem Pole has led us to the Cross; the village, forest and river deities have led us to the Krishna of Kurukshetra. Thus the progression is endless in this world of Time and Space. On January 10, 1914 the Mother wrote a sweet, almost childlike *prayer*:

My aspiration rises towards Thee ever the same in its almost childlike form, so ordinary in its simplicity, but my call is ever more ardent, and behind the faltering words there is all the fervour of my concentrated will. And I implore Thee, O Lord, in spite of the naiveté of this expression that is hardly intellectual, I implore Thee for more true light, true purity, sincerity

and love, and all this for all, for the multitude constituting what I call my being, and for the multitude constituting the universal being, I implore Thee, though I know that it is perfectly useless to implore Thee, for we alone, in our ignorance and ill-will, can stand in the way of Thy glorious and total manifestation, but something childlike within me finds a support in this mental attitude, I implore Thee that the peace of Thy reign may spread throughout the earth

The Mother makes it clear that if the *ignorance and ill-will* in our being is eliminated then there will be automatically a *glorious and total manifestation*. Yet instead of preparing ourselves, turning within and purifying the dross, our hearts go out and call to the object of our aspiration. To be forever occupied with our own limited personal being becomes unbearable. The remembrance of the Divine who is the acme of all perfections gives us a necessary uplift, a needed release from the prison of our corporeal imperfections. Without this call, this reaching out to the Lord, the endless work of self-elevation would become tedious. That is why century after century, in country after country, in different cadences and languages the devotees exult in the 'call'. A call to the Lord, a thought of the heights always relieve us from the prison of our ordinariness and from the futility of things.

A very important point in the above passage is the Mother's supplication on behalf of *the multitude constituting what I call my being and for the multitude constituting the universal being*. The universal being and its upliftment were always the concern of the Mother. Probably it was due to the Mother's call that such a greatening of the universal consciousness took place which made the world capable of uniting and standing up to the great evil Hitler embodied.

Little by little, through each sincere supplication and resultant greatening in the universal consciousness, the Mother held the hounds of total world destruction at bay until she and Sri Aurobindo could bring down the Supramental Power on earth and thus secure its survival.

In the second part of this *prayer* the Mother reverts to the limitlessness of the Unlimited. She writes

O inaccessible summit which we unceasingly scale without ever reaching Thee, sole Reality of our being whom we believe we have found only to see Thee immediately escape us, marvellous state which we think we have seized but which leads us farther and farther into ever unexplored depths and immensities, no one can say, "I have known Thee," and yet all carry Thee in themselves, and in the silence of their soul can hear the echo of Thy voice; but this silence is itself progressive, and whatever be the perfection of the union we have realised, as long as we belong by our body to the world of relativity, this Union with Thee can always grow more perfect

But all these words we use to speak about Thee are only idle talk  
Grant that I may become Thy faithful servitor

This is the crux of our problems—the relativity of our world. this also is the privilege of our life. This relativity makes it possible for us to enjoy the high adventure of playing hide and seek with the Divine through the prism of Time and Space. There is no adventure, no withholding and unveiling of self, except on our blessed earth. Here only is it possible to die and be reborn and take up the *search* again. For this great opportunity, O Death! we accept Thee with gratitude We welcome Thy masks of transience until the day Thou wouldst put on Thy face of Immortality.

### *Lighting the Suns*

For whom did *Aditi* light these countless suns in the spaces and why did she put this lovely moon on the brow of the night? Who are the Gods who will descend this luminous staircase, stepping on sun-rungs hung in the sky? For whose advent is waiting the vastness and grandeur of this Creation which overwhelms us with its beauty? What is the Divine's Purpose in things and when and how will it be fulfilled?

Why does the mud remain mud, why is it not transformed into gold dust? Why is the earth peopled with hapless humanity, a dupe of death and falsehood? When will it be blessed with Godheads? What is the mystery behind the long-drawn-out travail of Mother Earth and how long and how often will God be defeated in us? What Dark Power annuls our aspirations and undoes our hard-earned Tapas through a careless act done in a sudden moment?

There *is* a divine Secret behind the Creation. The Divine Mother, *Aditi*, lighted a lamp of hope in her heart and has nursed its light through the vast stretches of unimaginable Time. The dreams of the Divine are as marvellous and unimaginable as the Divine herself is.

Throughout the ages she, the Mother, has toiled for one Aim—the Transformation of the earth and its creatures. Long before meeting Sri Aurobindo—the Avatar of Supermind—the Mother, his Shakti, was preparing the earth-consciousness and its creatures for Transformation—a Transformation which would make earth a rival of the highest heavens. This she makes abundantly clear in her *prayer* of January 11, 1914:

... But, lord, I know that it will come one day. I know that a day will come when Thou wilt transform all those who come to us; Thou wilt transform them so radically that, liberated completely from the bonds of the past, they will begin to live in Thee an entirely new life, a life made solely of Thee, with Thee as its sovereign Lord

This is the dream-outcome for which she has strewn, like light-petals, a million suns on the bosom of the spaces and for which she has put a moon as a seal of future beauty on the forehead of the night. All earth awaits this Transformation which would justify the anguish and pain of life, which would justify the fire-path that centuries have traversed and explain the necessity or the inevitability of death which has wrecked every living being.

This is what would justify the Divine's cruel-seeming dispensations. This will be the happy culmination of the labour of the gods, the recompense to Mother Earth for her age-long sufferings and ordeals.

This is the Goal for which our sweet Mother struggled long and constantly, and for which we, the handful of aspiring disciple-souls, have followed in her footsteps life after lacerating life. This has been promised and *will* take place. The Supramental Power has already breached the hitherto impenetrable hold of the Inconscient.

Why did it take so long? What is it that has prolonged the struggle, delayed the Manifestation? The Mother gives us the reason:

Every moment all the unforeseen, the unexpected, the unknown is before us, every moment the universe is created anew in its entirety and in every one of its parts. And if we had a truly living faith, if we had the absolute certitude of Thy omnipotence and Thy sole reality, Thy manifestation could at each moment become so evident that the whole universe would be transformed by it. But we are so enslaved to everything that is around us and has gone before us, we are so influenced by the whole totality of manifested things, and our faith is so weak that we are yet unable to serve as intermediaries for the great miracle of transfiguration.

This is the mighty Illusion, this seeming inevitability of things, the unbroken continuity of Manifestation, which stop and bar us from taking tremendous steps forward, from exceeding our animal humanity and from becoming equal to gods. Those rare sages who could free themselves from this Illusion shot into the Divine Consciousness. They were freed from the shackles of the Inconscient and achieved inner Immortality. Those optimists who were not as radical as the Vedantins but still challenged Fate and disregarded the downward pull, could write in radiant hues their lives by their simple faith and hope. Not only is a sweeping outer or inner victory like that of a Napoleon or of a Vivekananda possible at each moment but also far more radical transformations. What circumscribes our imagination or aspiration is the grand overpowering illusion of this outward continuity of things, this seeming illusion of the inevitability of the *status quo*, of disease, decay and death. There have been yogis who challenged the Illusion and have lived for hundreds of years. We have only to free ourselves from the shackles of limits because, as the Mother assures us, *every moment the*

*universe is created anew in its entirety and in every one of its parts*

Nothing is impossible anymore. Let us keep our sights fixed on the stars and then, as the Mother says,

... in this way all anxieties will be transformed into serenity, all anguish into peace, all doubts into certainties, all ugliness into harmony, all egoism into self-giving, all darkness into light and all suffering into immutable happiness.

Even now, at this very moment, we can begin to change our destiny; we can enter the Kingdom of the Lord where miracles are the *common rule* and the unexpected the norm. Let us disregard all that has happened and is happening to us and to the world, let us will for something great and high and make radiant summits our play-fields. As when we change our position on a mountain and walk away from the beaten track and our eyes take a new direction, vista after new vista opens before us, in the same way if we put on the twin wings of faith and hope and dare the hitherto impossible, we can win our Godhead. The Mother has asserted:

But art Thou not already performing this beautiful miracle? I see it flowering everywhere around us!

O divine law of beauty and love, supreme liberator, there is no obstacle to thy power. Only our own blindness deprives us of the comforting sight of Thy constant victory

My heart sings a hymn of gladness and my thought is illumined with joy

Thy transcendent and marvellous love is the sovereign Master of the world

This then is the happy Reality, this world of light and delight and love. We have only to assiduously call it

*(To be continued)*

SHYAM KUMARI

## SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

*(Continued from the issue of July 1996)*

No biography of Sri Aurobindo can be complete without adequate reference to the Mother

After meeting Sri Aurobindo the Mother realised that the new period that was opening before her was “a period of expansion rather than of concentration.” The divinisation of man, the transformation of nature, these were still the cardinal aims of the new humanity. For that a total and absolute surrender to the Supreme would be required.

The Mother wrote in April 1914 in her diary: “A great joy, a deep peace reign in me, and yet all my inner constructions have vanished like a vain dream and I find myself now, before Thy immensity, without a frame or system—a new stage has begun.”

So the Mother’s final plunge of *Atma-Samarpana* (Self-surrender)—an unfreezing of all barriers—a stream of eternal felicity, she expressed in her diary dated 10 April, 1914:

“Suddenly the veil was rent, the horizon was disclosed—and before the clear vision my whole being threw itself at Thy Feet in a great outburst of gratitude.”

“I seem to have no more limits; there is no longer the perception of the body, no sensations, no feelings, no thoughts—a clear, pure, tranquil immensity penetrated with love and light filled with an unspeakable beatitude is all that is there and that alone seems now to be myself..”

In the strength of perfect certitude, and in the beauty of her calm serenity the Mother dedicated herself to a new goal in order to relieve the agony of the world, its transformation and ultimate divinisation.

The spiritual significance of the meeting between the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, two prophet-souls, was immeasurable. They brought about a fusion, an identity of ideals, aspirations and strivings that would lead to an earthly transformation and the Life Divine. One born in the West brought with her—apart from her occult and spiritual knowledge and power—a rich heritage of all that is great and noble in the occident, the dynamic energy, and the ability and capacity for organisation and that was aptly supported by Sri Aurobindo’s Eastern contribution of firm faith and ineffable peace and poise.

“Richard and Mirra took up residence at 3, rue Duplex, not far from Sri Aurobindo’s house on rue François Martin. Mirra used to call on Sri Aurobindo daily in the afternoon between 4 and 4.30, bringing with her some sweets she had prepared for him. Once a week, on Sundays, Sri Aurobindo went across to the Richards in the evening for dinner. Nolini and the other young men would also

come after their game of football. There was much to plan and discuss and sometimes the talks went on till late at night.”<sup>1</sup>

Sri Aurobindo gave his support to Richard in electioneering, but Pondicherry politics at that time was so corrupt that an honest candidate had little chance of succeeding. So the election went against Richard. “In a letter to Motilal Roy at the time, Sri Aurobindo wrote that Richard’s votes in some centres were got rid of ‘by the simple process of reading Paul Bluysen (Richard’s opponent) wherever Paul Richard was printed’<sup>1</sup>. However, despite his defeat, Richard had succeeded in enlisting the support of many young men.”

We explained in the previous chapter that the Mother had been leading already a group of spiritual seekers in Paris known as *Le Cosmique* (The Cosmic) to think and live in terms of a new consciousness, embracing the whole of the human race. She formed a similar group, a Society, *L’Idée Nouvelle* (The New Idea) in French India with its headquarters in Pondicherry.

The following is the short notice on *L’Idée Nouvelle* which appeared in Sri Aurobindo’s journal *Arjya*, on the 15th August, 1914 (*vide Mother India*, April 24, 1962), under Sri Aurobindo’s name.

“The Society has already made a beginning by grouping together young men of different castes and religions in a common ideal. All sectarian and political questions are necessarily foreign to its idea and its activities. It is on a higher plane of thought superior to external differences of race, caste, creed and opinion and in the solidarity of the Spirit that unity can be realised.

“The *Idée Nouvelle* has two rules only for its members, first, to devote some time every day to meditation and self-culture, the second, to use or create daily at least one opportunity of being helpful to others. This is, naturally, only the minimum of initial self-training necessary for those who have yet to cast the whole trend of their thought and feeling into the mould of a higher life and to enlarge the egoistic into a collective consciousness.

“The Society has its headquarters at Pondicherry with a reading-room and library. A section has been founded at Karikal and others are likely to be opened at Yanaon and Mahe.”

One result of the subsequent meetings of the Richards with Sri Aurobindo, and discussions between them was to start a philosophical journal devoted to the exposition of the logical basis of the spiritual truths experienced and visioned by Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo accepted the proposal. Reminiscing about it, he recounted to his disciples later: ‘Richard came and said, “Let us have a synthesis of knowledge.” I said “All right. Let us synthesise.”’ In June 1914, when the decision was taken, Sri Aurobindo wrote a letter to Motilal Roy: “In this Review my new theory of the Veda will appear as also translation and explanation of the Upanishads, a series of essays giving my system of Yoga and a book of Vedantic philosophy (not Shankara’s but Vedic Vedanta) giving the Upanishadic founda-



tions of my theory of the ideal life towards which humanity must move. You will see so far as my share is concerned, it will be the intellectual side of my work for the world.”<sup>2</sup>

The decision was taken on 1st June 1914, and the first issue came out on 15th August, 1914, which was a birthday of Sri Aurobindo. The journal was named *Arya*. It was also decided that the *Arya* should have a French version as *Revue de la Grande Synthèse*. The *Arya* came out uninterruptedly from August 1914 to January 1921.

The objectives and the plan of the *Arya* were clearly enunciated by Sri Aurobindo. “.. to feel out for the thought of the future, to help in shaping its foundations and to link it to the best and most vital thought of the past.”<sup>3</sup>

We are reproducing a note which appeared in one of the issues:

### “ARYA”

MONTHLY REVIEW, Vol I, No 1. Preface, Aug 1914-July 1915

The “ARYA” is a Review of pure philosophy.

The object which it has set before itself is twofold.—

1. A systematic study of the highest problems of existence;
2. The formation of a vast Synthesis of knowledge, harmonising the diverse religious traditions of humanity occidental as well as oriental. Its method will be that of a realism, at once rational and transcendental,—a realism consisting in the unification of intellectual and scientific disciplines with those of intuitive experience.

This Review will also serve as an organ for the various groups and societies founded on its inspiration

“We believe in the constant progression of humanity and we hold that progression is the working out of a Thought in Life which sometimes manifests itself on the surface and sometimes sinks below and works behind the mask of external forces and interests.”<sup>4</sup>

“The problem of thought therefore is to find out the right idea and the right way of harmony; to restate the ancient and eternal spiritual truth of the Self so that it shall reembrace, permeate and dominate the mental and physical life; to develop the most profound and vital methods of psychological self-discipline and self-development so that the mental and psychical life of man may express the spiritual life through the utmost possible expansion of its own richness, power and complexity; and to seek for the means and motives by which his external life, his society and his institutions may remould themselves progressively in the truth of the spirit and develop towards the utmost possible harmony of individual freedom and social unity. This is our idea and our search, in the ‘*Arya*’.”<sup>5</sup>

“Our first preoccupation in the *Arya* has therefore been with the deepest



thought that we could command on the philosophical foundations of the problem; and we have been so profoundly convinced that without this basis nothing we could say would have any real, solid and permanent value that we have perhaps given too great a space to difficult and abstruse thought whether in the shaping of our own ideas or in the study and restatement of the ancient Eastern knowledge.”\*6

“Unity for the human race by an inner oneness and not only by an external association of interests; the resurgence of man out of merely intellectual and aesthetic into the glories of the spiritual existence; the pouring of the power of the Spirit into the physical mould and mental instrument so that man may develop his manhood into that supermanhood which shall exceed our present state as much as this exceeds the animal state from which Science tells us that we have issued. These three are one; for man’s unity and man’s self-transcendence can come only by living in the Spirit.”7

Why did Sri Aurobindo choose the name *Arya* for his journal?

Sri Aurobindo explained the significance of the name in an early issue of the journal. He said:

“... the word in its original use expressed not a difference of race, but a difference of culture. For in the Veda the Aryan peoples are those who had accepted a particular type of self-culture, of inward and outward practice, of ideality, of aspiration....

“In later times, the word *Arya* expressed a particular ethical and social ideal, an ideal of well-governed life, candour, courtesy, nobility, straight dealing, courage, gentleness, purity, humanity, compassion, protection of the weak, liberality, observance of social duty, eagerness for knowledge, respect for the wise and learned... the combined ideal of the Brahmana and the Kshatriya. ..

“Intrinsically, in its most fundamental sense, *Arya* means an effort or an uprising and overcoming. The *Arya* is he who strives and overcomes all outside him and within him that stands opposed to the human advance.

“Self-conquest is the first law of his nature... For in everything he seeks truth, in everything right, in everything height and freedom..

“Self-perfection is the aim of his self-conquest. Therefore what he conquers he does not destroy, but ennobles and fulfils. .. For always the Aryan is a worker and warrior. He spares himself no labour of mind or body whether to seek the Highest or to serve it. He avoids no difficulty, he accepts no cessation from fatigue. Always he fights for the coming of that kingdom within himself and in the world.”8

\* Sri Aurobindo, “Our Ideal”, *Arya*, Vol. II No. 1 (15 August 1915) pp. 1-9 (Of the extracts given here, all except the first and last are published, in a slightly revised form, in *The Supramental Manifestation and Other Writings*, SABCL Vol. 16, p. 308 and pp. 313-14.)

“The Aryan perfected is the Arhat. There is a transcendent Consciousness which surpasses the universe and of which all these worlds are only a side-issue and a by-play. To that consciousness he aspires and attains. There is a Consciousness which, being transcendent, is yet the universe and all that the universe contains. Into that consciousness he enlarges his limited ego; he becomes one with all beings and all inanimate objects in a single self-awareness, love, delight, all-embracing energy. There is a consciousness which, being both transcendental and universal, yet accepts the apparent limitations of individuality for work, for various standpoints of knowledge, for the play of the Lord with His creations; for the ego is there that it may finally convert itself into a free centre of the divine work and the divine play. That consciousness too he has sufficient love, joy and knowledge to accept; he is puissant enough to effect that conversion. To embrace individuality after transcending it is the last and divine sacrifice. The perfect Arhat is he who is able to live simultaneously in all these three apparent states of existence, elevate the lower into the higher, receive the higher into the lower, so that he may represent perfectly in the symbols of the world that with which he is identified in all parts of his being,—the triple and triune Brahman.”<sup>9</sup>

Sri Aurobindo further stated: “... to grow into the fullness of the divine is the true law of human life and to shape his earthly existence into its image is the meaning of his evolution. This is the fundamental tenet of the philosophy of the *Arya*.”<sup>10</sup>

*(To be continued)*

NILIMA DAS

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- 5 *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, by A B Purani, pp 156, 157
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## SRI AUROBINDO ON “SHAKTI”

### A CLARIFICATION

THE author of “Sri Aurobindo’s Conception of Shakti” in the May issue has quoted Sri Aurobindo from an early period and overlooked other writings which had to be considered from different angles in order for us to have a clearer and wider understanding of his views.

I believe that Sri Aurobindo spoke and acted according to the necessity of the period he was in, to the mentality and cultural trends of the people of the nation and to the particular individual’s spiritual and practical needs. We may conclude, by studying Sri Aurobindo’s life and reading his works, that he used the valued moral trends of the time to serve a higher or deeper purpose. Another fact is that Sri Aurobindo’s vision and concept of things grew in course of time, which is quite natural, even for an Avatar, since he gives himself to and shares in the growth of the evolving world.

The way the author tries to show how Sri Aurobindo conceived woman as *shakti* is very limited and can be misleading, as Sri Aurobindo has written at great length about *shakti*. The author seems to be stating that *shakti* and wife are the same, and that wife, woman, is the *shakti* of man. How can we put wife, woman and *shakti* in one category? If *shakti* means the capacity to give joy, strength and inspiration to a man, as the author seems to imply, does this mean that a man does not have the same capacity to give these to his wife? And if he does have the capacity to give these to his wife it implies that he has this *shakti* too! If these qualities are the powers of *shakti* then surely man equally shares them with woman.

Another misconception arising from the article is that woman’s role is to see to man’s needs and help him through all the problems of life. That she is an individual who can live for herself and for God in her is totally left out; for, of all things, Sri Aurobindo has given great importance to the individual’s independent life which is directed towards God. In Volume 15 of the Centenary Edition of Sri Aurobindo’s works, pages 605-606 give a very important passage about “the self-determination of the free individual within the free collectivity in which he lives..”. I quote now the relevant portion:

“We have travelled to another conception of the child as a soul with a being, a nature and capacities of his own who must be helped to find them, to find himself, to grow into their maturity, into a fullness of physical and vital energy and the utmost breadth, depth and height of his emotional, his intellectual and his spiritual being. [‘He and his’ obviously includes ‘she’, both the male and female child and is not exclusive.] So too the subjection of woman, the property [right] of the man over the woman, was once an axiom of social life and has only in recent times been effectively challenged. So strong was or had become the

instinct of this domination in the male animal man, that even religion and philosophy have had to sanction it, very much in that formula in which Milton expresses the height of masculine egoism, 'He for God only, she for God in him',—if not actually indeed for him in the place of God. This idea too is crumbling into the dust, though its remnants still cling to life by many strong tentacles of old legislation, continued instinct, persistence of traditional ideas; the fiat has gone out against it in the claim of woman to be regarded, she too, as a free individual being."

In relation to the vast concept which Sri Aurobindo offered about *shakti* I would like to give another quotation:

"To open ourselves to the universal energy is always possible to us, because that is all around us and always flowing into us, it is that which supports and supplies all our inner and outer action and in fact we have no power of our own in any separately individual sense, but only a personal formulation of the one Shakti. And, on the other hand, this universal Shakti is within ourselves, concentrated in us, for the whole power of it is present in each individual as in the universe, and there are means and processes by which we can awaken its greater and potentially infinite force and liberate it to its larger workings."<sup>1</sup>

This reveals quite clearly that *shakti* is not the indweller and inspirer of woman only but can be equally so in man. This does not imply that *shakti* is not a feminine principle, but then this concept has to be used in the correct context and in a wide sense since we tend to limit universal concepts according to our small human perceptions.

HERTHA

<sup>1</sup> SABCL, Vol 21, *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), pp 726-27

# POLITICAL VEDANTISM—ITS CONCEPT AND PRACTICE

## CHAPTER I

### APPEARANCE OF A YOUNG POLITICIAN WITH DEEP INSIGHT

“The world needs India and needs her free. The work she has to do now is to organise life in the terms of Vedanta, and that is a work she cannot do while overshadowed by a foreign power and a foreign civilisation. She cannot do it without taking the management of her own life into her own hands. She must live her own life and not the life of a part or subordinate in a foreign Empire.”

—SRI AUROBINDO

“I was a poet and a politician, not a philosopher,” said Sri Aurobindo in a letter to one of his disciples long ago in 1934.

But what type of politician was he? What was his political philosophy? What was the purpose of his being involved in politics? And what were his contributions to this field?

These and many other similar questions can be raised on this particular phase of his life, and therefore the issue has to be dealt with in such a way that there would not remain any such questions unanswered. Our endeavour, however sincere it may be, to comprehend Sri Aurobindo's political thought by studying only the role he played during the *Swadeshi Movement* in the first decade of this century, and his involvement in the Alipore Bomb Case, will undoubtedly prove futile. For this brief period of five or six years, though it comprises a phase of paramount importance in his political life, it falls short of his vision of the evolutionary progress of man towards the ultimate stage of his social and political life. Of course there is no gainsaying the fact that the role he played to create a free India through revolution is the key to the gateway of his political thought.

We have to decide where we start and where we conclude.

From varied records of his eventful life it appears that the seeds of his becoming a revolutionary to liberate his Motherland and accomplish his God-ordained mission started sprouting while he was a student in England. In his letter of 30th August 1905 to his wife Mrinalini Devi Sri Aurobindo explained his three “madnesses” of which the third one was his peculiar patriotism.

“Whereas others regard the country as an inert object, and know it as the plains, the fields, the forests, the mountains and rivers, I look upon my country as the Mother, I worship her and adore her as the Mother. What

would a son do when a demon sitting on the breast of his mother is drinking her blood? Would he sit down content to take his meals, and go on enjoying himself in the company of his wife and children, or would he, rather, run to the rescue of his mother? I know I have the strength to uplift this fallen race. This is not a new feeling within me, it is not of a recent origin, I was born with it, it is in my very marrow. God sent me to the earth to accomplish this great mission. At the age of fourteen the seed of it had begun to sprout and at eighteen it had been firmly rooted and become unshakable.”

In this context we may also recall a few words from his Independence Day Message of August 15, 1947

“August 15th is the birthday of free India. It marks for her the end of an old era, the beginning of a new age.

“I have been asked for a message on this great occasion but I am perhaps hardly in a position to give one. All I can do is to make a personal declaration of the aims and ideals conceived in my childhood and youth and now watched in their beginning of fulfilment.. Those aims and ideals were in their natural order these: a revolution which would achieve India’s freedom and her unity.”

From the above two documents as well as letters which are quoted below we will realise that his political life commenced when he had been a student in England. What he did during this period may be discussed later.

Incidentally, it may be pointed out that the above letter of Sri Aurobindo to his wife was originally written in Bengali, and was seized (along with many other letters and writings) and taken by the police at the time of his arrest from his 48, Grey St house (Calcutta), on 2nd May 1908, in connection with the Alipore Bomb Case. It was produced in the court as an exhibit and hence people came to know of it.

In the said letter Sri Aurobindo wrote that he had the strength to uplift the *fallen race* to which he belonged. How and why had the Indians become a *fallen race*? Was it due to their living over centuries under a foreign yoke?

No, perhaps that was not the reason. That circumstance might be a factor that led the race to become fallen; but the real cause lay elsewhere.

We know that after completing his studies in England Sri Aurobindo came back to India on February 6, 1893 at the age of 21 to join the Baroda State Service. As he set foot on the soil of India at Apollo Bunder a vast calm descended upon him and surrounded him from all sides and stayed with him for months afterwards. It was a very significant spiritual event (the experience of the Atman, the one universal Self) because whatever realisation he had experienced



and whatever ideas he had conceived in England acquired a very strong spiritual base. This was followed by several other experiences of which the most remarkable was his vivid vision of the Light and Force of the inmost being of India as the Mother of the world. This blissful experience resulted in the creation of *Bhawani Mandir*—a marvellous piece of writing which was banned by the British Government, and given back to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram by the Government of free India.

We may, in this context, make an excerpt from it which may help in our search for the root cause as to why the race had become *fallen*:

“India cannot perish, our race cannot become extinct, because among all the divisions of mankind it is to India that is reserved the highest and the most splendid destiny, the most essential to the future of the human race.”<sup>5</sup>

A portion of his speech delivered on 19th June 1909 in the Conference at Jhalakati, in the district of Barisal in Bengal may also be recollected to realise the issue in its depth:

“We are no ordinary race. We are a people ancient as our hills and rivers and we have behind us a history of manifold greatness, not surpassed by any other race, we are the descendants of those who performed Tapasya and underwent unheard-of austerities for the sake of spiritual gain...”<sup>6</sup>

With the British rule in India the modern European civilisation and culture entered into Indian life. Blinded by its intoxicating glamour of material well-being Indians began to imitate European ideas and culture and thereby gradually became uprooted from their own ideas and culture founded on Vedic teachings. Thus by shunting its *Swadharma* the race became *fallen*. For her restoration India needed spiritual regeneration. But that was not possible until she was liberated from alien domination. She must be reborn and repossess her soul to become conscious of her noble mission in the world and to base all her activities on a strong spiritual foundation.

Here is another excerpt from *Bhawani Mandir*.

“If India is to survive, she must be made young again. Rushing and billowing streams of energy must be poured into her; her soul must become, as it was in the old times, like the surges, vast, puissant, calm or turbulent at will, an ocean of action or of force.”<sup>7</sup>

In his letter to his wife Sri Aurobindo also explained what Mother India was to him. He had depicted the same idea more precisely in *Bhawani Mandir* under the sub-title—*III. Jnana: The Message of the Mother*:

“When, therefore, you ask who is Bhawani the Mother, She herself answers you, ‘I am the Infinite Energy which streams forth from the Eternal in the world and the Eternal in yourselves I am the Mother of the Universe, the Mother of the worlds, and for you who are children of the Sacred Land,... I am Bhawani Bharati, Mother of India’ ”<sup>8</sup>

Now let us see how the seed had begun to sprout when he had been in England as he indicated in the said letter to his wife.

To one of his biographers Sri Aurobindo, adopting the third person mode, once stated, in clarifying the biographer’s wrong depiction of his life in England, “at this age [before twenty] Aurobindo began first to be interested in Indian politics of which previously he knew nothing. His father began sending the newspaper *The Bengalee* [edited by Surendranath Banerjee] with passages marked relating cases of maltreatment of Indians by Englishmen and he wrote in his letters denouncing the British Government in India as a heartless Government. At the age of eleven Aurobindo had already received strongly the impression that a period of general upheaval and great revolutionary changes was coming in the world and he himself was destined to play a part in it His attention was now drawn to India and this feeling was soon canalised into the idea of the liberation of his own country. But the ‘firm decision’ took full shape only towards the end of another four years It had already been made when he went to Cambridge and as a member and for sometime secretary of the Indian Majlis at Cambridge he delivered many revolutionary speeches which, as he afterwards learnt, had their part in determining the authorities to exclude him from the Indian Civil Service; the failure in the riding test was only the occasion, for in some other cases an opportunity was given for remedying this defect in India itself ”<sup>9</sup>

We know that from the age of 14 to 18 he had been deeply absorbed in his studies—mastering Greek and Latin, English and French, and writing brilliant poems. But now we come to understand that while in England he had been not only a serious student but also a burgeoning patriot and growing politician. During this time, in the words of Sri Aurobindo. “The Indian students in London did once meet to form a secret society called romantically the ‘Lotus and Dagger’ in which each member vowed to work for the liberation of India generally and to take some special work in furtherance of that end.... Indian politics at that time was timid and moderate and this was the first attempt of the kind by Indian students in England ”<sup>10</sup>

It was hardly six months after his ‘Home Coming’ in February 1893 that Sri Aurobindo had the chance of expressing his views on Indian politics in an English-Marathi weekly of Bombay in which his treatise, “New Lamps for Old”, appeared in a series of nine parts from August 7, 1893 to March 5, 1894. This series was preceded by another article of his, *India and the British Parliament* (June 26, 1893)

With the appearance of “New Lamps for Old” in the *Indu Prakash* there emerged a young politician with new ideas and a new action-plan in a sphere where the leaders’ role till then had been dubious and vacillating. Let us have an overview of what Sri Aurobindo himself commented on this interesting episode of his supposedly unwarranted entry into the field:

It was “at the instance of K. G. Deshpande, Sri Aurobindo’s Cambridge friend who was editor (of the English Section) of the paper,” that Sri Aurobindo agreed to contribute a series of articles entitled “New Lamps for Old” for publication in his paper “... but the first two articles made a sensation and frightened Ranade and other Congress leaders. Ranade warned the proprietor of the paper that, if this went on, he would surely be prosecuted for sedition. Accordingly the original plan of the series had to be dropped at the proprietor’s instance. Deshpande requested Sri Aurobindo to continue in a modified tone and he reluctantly consented, but felt no further interest and the articles were published at long intervals and finally dropped of themselves altogether”<sup>11</sup>

The purpose of Sri Aurobindo’s writing the series as it is understood from a thorough study of them was to rouse the nation from its apathy and torpor and to revitalise the Congress as he had hinted in his speeches in the Indian Majlis in Cambridge. It was he who first evaluated the political situation of India with reference to its relation with the downtrodden, overlooked and neglected class known as the proletariat. In stern and unwavering language he wrote:

“... I hope to have enforced on my readers the precise and intrinsic meaning of that count in my indictment which ensures the Congress as a body not popular and not honestly desirous of a popular character—in fact as a middle-class organ selfish and disingenuous in its public action and hollow in its professions of a large and disinterested patriotism. I hope to have convinced them that this is a solid charge and a charge entirely damaging to their character for wisdom and public spirit. ... The proletariat among us is sunk in ignorance and overwhelmed with distress. But with that distressed and ignorant proletariat. resides, whether we like it or not, our sole assurance of hope. our sole chance in the future. ... Yet the proletariat is, as I have striven to show, the real key of the situation. Torpid he is and immobile; he is nothing of an actual force, but he is a very great potential force, and whoever succeeds in understanding and eliciting his strength, becomes by the very fact master of the future”<sup>12</sup>

It may be noted in this context that Sri Aurobindo’s “articles in the *Indu Prakash* were anonymous, although many people in Bombay knew that he was the writer”<sup>13</sup>

Even when he stopped writing in the *Indu Prakash* he did not keep himself quite aloof from politics; on the contrary he turned his attention to study the

conditions in the country so that he might be able to judge more maturely what could be done. This was the period (up to 1905) of his silent planning and secret preparation.

But what was his plan and preparation for? Was it for some kind of direct action which would in the fullness of time flare up into an armed insurrection? If so, how did he strive for its accomplishment?

*(To be continued)*

SAMAR BASU

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## HAMLET

THE thing that worries people most  
About Lord Hamlet, pre and post

His madness, is—though he was great  
He always was a little late.

He thought too much, and did not do  
The deed in time—he thought he'd rue

It later, when the deed was done  
And everyone had had their fun.

He'd find it hard to pay the faker  
And answer to his awesome maker.

Because of this, he made a mess,  
Turned simple stuff to games of chess.

He got done in, the tale is gory,  
A twisted, convoluted story.

The story simply told is that  
In Elsinore, things were quite flat.

Hamlet senior sat in state  
And junior tried to cogitate

In Wittenberg—he studied thought  
While things in Elsinore did rot

To cut our frills, get to the nub,  
Queen Hamlet loved (and here's the rub)

The brother of her husband King:  
She thought it would be just a fling

But he was made of sterner stuff,  
Wanted more than just some fluff

You're right, his aims were overgrown,  
His evil eyes were on the throne,

This Brother C was quick to act  
Unlike young Hamlet, that's a fact.

So in the time Prince H would take  
To think—was it a bad mistake?

He killed the King, and, as he groaned,  
Quickly occupied the throne

And took his wife as Queen to boot.  
This last was bad, in fact uncouth.

He told the court the King had died  
Of natural causes, then he sighed.

Hamlet, he was quite aghast,  
All this had happened pretty fast,

This father-uncle, mother queen  
Smelt rotten, odd, in fact obscene.

Hamlet felt that all was not  
So innocent—he smelt a plot

So he pretended to be mad  
To save him from this 'Mum', this 'Dad'

And their endless filial feelings,  
Their counterfeit, their double dealings.

And when he saw his father's Ghost  
It told a tale, which made a host

Of allegations against the King  
Which took no great unravelling.

The Ghost it said its brother lied:  
He poisoned me, that's why I died:

So revenge, revenge, my dear Hamlet,  
This scoundrel—don't you let him pet

And snuggle with your Mom, my wife,  
I cannot take it—end my strife.

Right there our Hamlet made a speech  
Which promised action—quite a peach—

But morning came—it seemed like hype;  
The Prince, he did revert to type:

What if the Ghost had been a sprite  
Just out to make him pick a fight?

He wanted proof, not allegations,  
Alibis, not obfuscations

His search for proof was slowed a spot  
By a plot within a plot.

Hamlet loved Ophelia true  
But this made Dad Polonius blue

Polonius was the Prime Minister,  
A bit obtuse, a bit sinister

Laertes, his son agreed  
That all must scan, suspect this deed

He took umbrage, felt offended  
For his daughter—parried, fended

Off the issue—told her pat:  
No meeting Hamlet, that is that.

When Ophelia, quite a sissy,  
Returned his gifts—all prim and prissy—

Hamlet, who did love her madly,  
Got even worse, and took it badly.

He lectured her in purple prose  
When Polonius, peeping, rose

And told the King we know he's crazy  
But we thought the reason hazy

I know the cause. I bred and taught her,  
It is my one, my only daughter

Polonius and the King by plan  
Loosed Ophelia on her man.

Ophelia should have known much better;  
She lied to Hamlet, who just let her,

Then (though in his throat a lump)  
He told her—take a running jump,

Bawds like you come every day  
When your fathers let you stray

Ophelia, maddened by her sadness,  
Suddenly was filled with gladness.

She lay upon the water deep  
And in its arms fell fast asleep.

Laertes blamed Hamlet squarely  
Though, in retrospect, unfairly.

Just then a theatre group arrived  
And Hamlet, seeing them, contrived

A flawless plan to mirror life—  
In drama's form to cast his strife,

Project the story of the crime  
And watch out for the tell-tale sign.

The play is staged, the poison scene  
Shocks the King and hurts the Queen.

The King he screams and looks quite wan,  
Aha, says Hamlet, there's my man



But he dithers, makes it late,  
Lets it slip—procrastinate.

Instead, our Hamlet goes to speak  
To 'Mum', to argue, reason, seek

Some cause that made her love this rotter,  
The witchcraft that had snared and caught her.

As they speak, with a great swagger  
He draws out his shiny dagger,

To mirror 'Mum', show her her face  
A parody, a sheer disgrace.

But 'Mum' thinks it is amply clear  
That her dear son is killing her

In fright, she balks and stares and screams  
And guess who squeals behind the screen?

Hamlet thinks it is the King  
And, for once, he does his thing.

He thrusts the dagger in—erroneous!  
It is, in truth, just old Polonius

This gives the King a great excuse  
To throw a tantrum, blow a fuse.

To England fast he sends him—slick  
With a small message—kill him quick.

But Hamlet's smart, avoids the snare  
Returns to haunt his usual lair.

Laertes—his ego fuelled  
Invites poor Hamlet to a duel.

Don't worry, says the King, he'll die  
Because some poison I will buy,

Smear it on your rapier tip—  
Just one small jab, and he is pipped

And should that not be dovetailed, dandy,  
I'll keep a poisoned wine cup handy.

The duel begins, and in the din  
The whole dashed party is done in.

The Queen is first to die, decline  
Because she drinks the poisoned wine

Laertes and Hamlet rip  
Each other's arms with poisoned tip

Laertes—he's bought his lot,  
Confesses, squeals, reveals the plot

Hamlet says: you creep, you heel,  
Drink this wine and feel this steel—

Pours poison down his Uncle's throat,  
Thrusts the rapier through his coat.

Then, what could be as fine or sweeter,  
A farewell speech in pentameter

From this prince who thinks so well  
But acts not fast—that's why he fell.

To be or not to be, he said  
And now, just look, the fellow's dead

Which tells us all that we should act  
Before we ascertain each fact.

Why, then, we all would know the score—  
Not be dead ducks in Elsinore.

AMIT JAYARAM  
Writer/Actor, New Delhi

(Courtesy of the *Bulletin of the Shakespeare Society of India—1994-95*)

## TWO POEMS

### THOSE WINGS

INVINCIBLE white wings in a space of peace,  
Guardians of Truth, are gliding ever close  
Above. their feathers sweep the vibrant air  
That trembles at their mighty presence's touch.

Sometimes we feel their soft caress on us,  
We are not alone in all our loneliness.  
Our heart-beats throb within one heart of love  
And in one fiery breath our breathings move.

Our being yearns to meet these calm white wings,  
To fly in their sweet fragrance's liberty  
And to be freed from all wrong thought at last  
Into the bliss of Godward ecstasy.

So will it be. Where those white wings are near  
No darkness can persist, Truth will reign sheer.

### MY HOME

From where I came once there was my home,  
But where it was I forgot.  
Yet I remember the silver air  
Round trees on a lovely spot.

Amidst these conflicts, passions, pains  
I must sleep, wake, sit or walk  
In a world of relentless contraries  
Where days are dim, nights dark.

Can here I be at home who long  
Have lived by that stream of peace  
Whose waters mirror the suns and moons  
And stars of the universe?

At last I found in One the Two—  
They are my home, to them I go.

RUTH

## THE TRAVELLER

Up there on the mountain top  
Majestic stands the Temple  
Silhouetted against a cloudless sky.  
Nothing stirs—  
A silence of expectation  
Lies embedded in the surroundings ...  
The lone traveller looks up and knows  
The yonder goal he has to reach.  
The journey begins..

Up the serpentine narrow path  
He starts at a brisk pace.  
A stranger to the uncharted realm,  
The untrodden path dares his footfalls.  
Hidden by rocks and clumps of trees,  
The Temple is no longer visible  
Coming upon a milestone planted beside the path,  
He stops.  
The stone bears no markings,  
Nothing to encourage the remaining mileage.  
It's as if his progress measures in time  
Rather than in distance  
Ahead lie several other such stones  
Standing like silent sentinels,  
Witnesses of the quest for the Unknown.  
And he knows that he can only proceed  
By inscribing the word 'VICTORY' on the soil,  
At the foot of each milestone.  
With the help of a broken twig  
He etches the parched soil  
With the enchanted word—  
A passport to his proceeding  
And thus at each milestone  
He bends, writes, starts again,  
Stops, writes and proceeds

A sudden panic seizes him—  
If thus he spills precious moments at every stone  
He may not be able to reach the Temple  
Within the stipulated time.

And all would fade away like a dream  
Upon awakening from slumber,  
The journey remain incomplete.  
Is there no other way?  
Yes... there is one ..  
He knows from within.

The traveller leaves the path  
And, searching amidst the bushes and trees,  
Finds the foliage upon whose boughs  
Blossom the flowers of 'Victory'  
Gathering an armful of these flowers  
He begins to run and at the foot of every stone  
Drops a flower of 'Victory'.

The temple looms up ahead  
With its massive carved wooden doors  
The forbidding stone structure  
Untended through time wears a desolate mask  
Frowning upon the living soul.  
He pushes the mighty doors  
But alas, they are bolted.  
A firm determination takes shape within.  
With all his might he rushes forward  
And throws himself upon them  
The next moment he stands inside,  
The doors still closed behind him.

But the darkness inside engulfs him.  
Almost suffocating, he knows not where he is  
Groping around in the grim surrounding,  
Each movement of his vibrating the dense darkness.  
Then from the bleak depths arose a dire murmuring,  
Voices condemning him for thus entering the forbidden abode.  
He can now see pale shadows slowly moving  
And knows at once that the priests of the Temple  
Are coming to get hold of him,  
The intruder, who dares disturb the inert passivity  
With a living breath and a throbbing heart!  
They would throw him down the mountain.  
Will this journey be in vain?  
Now that he has roused

The shadowy figures from their deep slumber,  
The Deity of the Temple alone can protect him.  
He has very little time left.  
He has to find the Deity.. but where?

Once more the knowledge within reveals  
That the Deity is installed in the upper chamber.  
Looking up he sees a circular opening.  
But how to climb there? The priests have removed the ladder.  
He must reach the upper floor... he has the power.  
With a silent call to the Deity unknown  
He leaps up and through the opening reaches the chamber.

In the dimness there, he can faintly discern  
The silhouette of a Deity with four arms:  
It is the Goddess Kali!—  
Kali, the Slayer of titans,  
The Dissipator of obscurity,  
The Power of purification.  
He has reached the Deity at last.  
The darkness is dissipating  
And the stone Idol of Kali is more visible.  
He advances towards the Idol..

Some noise behind him makes him turn.  
The priests having fixed the ladder  
Have come up behind and are about to grab him.  
They would do their utmost to prevent the intruder  
From reaching the Deity.  
The Idol being just a few feet away,  
He tries to run towards it  
But can only move slowly with great effort.  
Even as the priests lay their hands on him,  
With a last desperate effort he lunges forward  
And with his hands encircles the feet of the Deity.  
The inert statue comes to life...

Mother Kali manifests in all her splendour,  
Her radiating power shakes the temple with a thundering roar,  
The entire mountain trembles.  
The priests are aghast and screaming run about.  
The temple tilts towards the mountain gorge

And the priests slide from the temple,  
Tumble down the mountain and disappear.

The traveller is safe at the Feet of Mother Kali.  
The culmination of all his toil and pain,  
The limitless ecstasy of his endeavour.  
He has reached his Goal.

D.L.

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## I HAVE BEEN FOR A TIME

I HAVE been, for a time, in a land  
    where there was no night;  
Only the sun and a radiant sky  
    of Light  
When the sun in a glory of clouds  
    set and rose again from the ocean  
In one ecstatic motion,  
Then came again the time of night  
    and day  
When the sun in its appointed rounds,  
    refused to stay  
And bless my loneliness and pain,  
My separation from the light again,  
And I was lost with only the memory  
    of a radiance, oh when  
Will the sun come back to me and  
    then  
I shall know this glory in my soul?  
And I shall be only THAT—I shall  
    be whole!

ELIZABETH STILLER

## THE GOLDEN RAIN DROPS

ONE—Two—Three... they drop like golden rain drops all over the place, bringing with them a soft, mellow fragrance—soothing like old sweet memories Isn't there a tender touch of that Golden Light that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother want to establish on earth?

His body was suffused with a Golden Light. She broke open the door between the beyond and the earth with a golden hammer and "The Supramental Light, Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth" Isn't the Tree standing as a sentinel over Their Samadhi in touch with the Light in the deepest earth-core? And imbibing that Golden Light through its roots, its trunk, its branches and twigs, its leaves and finally in the tiny yellow flowers, it spreads a golden aura, charged with Their Love and Compassion for humanity, pervading the atmosphere with Their Grace.

Come November, sitting in the courtyard if you happen to look up, you will be struck with the beauty of a clear blue sky with a few floating clouds Haven't you observed it before? You can't remember. A few days later, looking up again, you see more of the sky and realise that the Service Tree is shedding its leaves, permitting you to see the wintry sky and enabling the far blue sky to marvel at the beauty of the Samadhi Winter has come.

One more month and you may feel a pang that perhaps the all-enveloping tree is dying—no leaves, only the branches and half-dead twigs and more of the sky and the clouds and the flying birds.

Days pass.

All of a sudden you will discover one day a few soft green leaves decorating the branches. Oh! the Tree is coming to life The courtyard gets partly covered. Spring has come.

Come February Darshan and the tree stands in all its grandeur. Its topmost branches held high—proud to be sheltering the thousands of devotees coming to the Samadhi and they in turn look up in awe and admiration

Come March and you will find a few yellowish patches scattered in the courtyard. In a day or two a few more of them A revelation! The flowers have come. You look up in all earnestness, only see the green curtain of leaves under the blue sky. A few more fresh flowers and then through the foliage you will find the golden flowers on the stems beckoning the southern breeze. Summer has come.

The Service Tree is in full bloom. A golden dome over the Samadhi.

And now comes your test. The courtyard is full of flowers. How to cross and reach the Meditation Hall without crushing them? You may find a few patches of crushed flowers and would not feel guilty stepping on them So here comes your agility, your flexibility, your muscle-control to hop, skip and jump! On occasion you may dash against a person doing the same skip and jump! Then you realise



that not only a physical fitness but a mental alertness is also required to cross the hurdles put by the tree.

Come 29th March and it covers the courtyard with a golden carpet to welcome the Mother on Her very first meeting with the Lord and unconsciously you will repeat the prayer of the Mother written on 30th March 1914:

“Peu importe qu’il y ait des milliers d’êtres plongés dans la plus épaisse ignorance, Celui que nous avons vu hier est sur terre; sa présence suffit à prouver qu’un jour viendra où l’ombre sera transformée en lumière, et où effectivement, Ton règne sera instauré sur la terre.”

(“It matters little that there are thousands of beings plunged in the densest ignorance, He whom we saw yesterday is on earth; His presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, and Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth.”)

Your competition with the tree continues. There are times when one is defeated. The flower drops on the exact spot at the very moment you put your foot and you crush it. Oh! what remorse to have crushed the golden glow. And you take up the challenge not to be defeated again.

Come 4th April and a shower of flowers welcomes the anniversary of Sri Aurobindo’s arrival at Pondicherry. As the town could not celebrate in 1910 for political reasons, the tree, keen on not losing this unique and golden opportunity, showers flowers in abundance all over the courtyard every year without fail. And one or two may even fall on your head or get caught in your dress. And you consider yourself very fortunate to have this gift from Them—of Their Love and Grace.

Come 24th April, the final arrival of the Mother in 1920 and there is a golden path laid down by the flowers to guide us all on the journey to the New World of which They were the harbingers and the pioneers.

“Lord, thou has willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.”

Shortly after, the flowers get scarce. One has the impression that they bloom only to celebrate these three very eventful and significant days in the history of the earth.

By August you will find a few dead twigs scattered in the courtyard. The leaves take a pale yellow colour. The autumn has come.

A sadness creeps into you with a strong feeling that one more year has

passed with no progress made on your part. You look up at the tree and it seems to say

“Don’t lose hope—take courage The path is arduous. The very regret of having wasted a year is a step forward So why not get ready like me for the next year Keep physically fit and mentally alert or else you may get defeated doing hop, skip and jump.

“Keep your aim, your very innermost root, fixed on Them like me and aspire for the new light and consciousness Haven’t you noticed how by my aspiration I am growing higher and higher. Let your heart grow as vast as the ocean. Be firm and noble and charitable. ‘Yes, there is a sublime charity, one which rises from a happy heart, from a serene soul ’ And dedicate your entire life to their Service. That’s the reason—I am THE SERVICE TREE.”

KRISHNA CHAKRAVARTI

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## BURNING BRAZIER

WHOSE is the love that burning through the world,  
An agony of flame uprising the midrib vein  
Transfigures into Marvel and Light  
This fervent appeal of mine?

Beneath whose looks my yearning soul  
Purer in intensity and turbulent grow?  
Whose eyes have I gazed sharply in,  
And loved creation the more?

Mother' in Thine—Thou wert my Queen;  
Thou wert the fountain-head of my song;  
Thine are these early blossoms  
Gathered by me so far, so long.

Then take to Thy heart this bouquet of love  
And know, for this the passion to excess was driven  
That self might be anointed and stilled  
To consecrate Thy glory divine

C. SUBBIAN

## IN REALMS OF IDEAS

SRI AUROBINDO and the Mother are our spiritual destiny. To realise them in ourselves and grow into their universality and transcendence is the fulfilment of our lives.

\*

When Sri Aurobindo descended on the earth in a human body, he became the comrade of every human being by taking a seat in man's heart. While he did this, his occult presence lit itself in every cell of every human body. In the Integral Yoga we try to realise these truths.

\*

Sri Aurobindo's "wrestlings" in life are his combats with falsehood, ignorance and lethargy.

\*

When we read Sri Aurobindo's writings, if we are receptive, his presence in them may implant in our mind the needed clarities, elaborations and arrow-points of relevance to what he writes about.

\*

If, instead of living in our self-created whim-world, we surrender in our hearts to the Mother's "deep world-whim," she will reveal to us the purpose and play of her youthful liberties with Sri Aurobindo's truths that vibrate Bliss.

\*

Sri Aurobindo looks out from his Chamber in every human heart and enjoys the different and unique perspective that each human being provides. If we surrender to him in our heart, he would share his supreme perspective with us, while he enjoys ours.

\*

The Mother's glory and bliss are the mystery she holds in her heart as much as she carries Sri Aurobindo's love and wisdom there. Her heart can reveal this to us if we become conscious of her infinite love that always surrounds us, and

having become aware of this love we surrender to it. This is so because her love surrounding us means that her heart is omnipresent and we are always within it. If, therefore, we so surrender to her, she would show us the majesty of Sri Aurobindo in his fullest glory and total bliss, and we would see her love and wisdom in the marvel of Sri Aurobindo's form

\*

The dreams erected on this world now by mind and life survive because Sri Aurobindo protects mankind from turning back into the dust blown down endless ages, as it happened in the past.

\*

The Mother's divine experiments are in reality her uncoverings of Sri Aurobindo's infinite disguises.

~

Sri Aurobindo's Avatarhood has brought within our search, prayer and call his shining immensities which remained lost for all creations of the infinite past. What is required is our relentless pursuit that keeps the aspiration always flaming, the call ever intense and the search ceaseless.

\*

"A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme . . .", generally, but we the chosen ones of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother owe everything to them—this is a one-way traffic. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are our creditors for ever; that is our privilege. So we must pray to them that they create for us new debts to repay in the form of surrender, while they constantly recover their old dues. Our debts to them are our delight. Let them never free us completely from our owings to them. Let this be an endless process of their creating newer and newer debts for us to repay while they convert old debts into gifts to us.

\*

The Mother is the splendid and royal march of the *ad infinitum*—Sri Aurobindo.

+

The Mother transmutes all life into eternal light, she transmutes all life into eternal fire, she transmutes all life into eternal nectar, and she transmits these transmutations of life to Sri Aurobindo who receives them as loving gifts of Bliss from the Mother—the process that has always gone on and on.

\*

The Mother is the Mother of Sri Aurobindo in his aspect of a royal and eternal child. In this self-existent kingly childhood, planets are his playthings and worlds are his toys. In the garden of limitless space his play is endless and tireless

\*

*'Sri Aurobindo' is a family* In association with the Mother, and in the context of her children he is a family. Also his whole unmanifest self is a latent family. Whatever creations come out of his unmanifest self—not only beings but suns, planets, all that exists in endless space, space itself, non-physical dimensions, all individual creations—all are part of his family

\*

The Mother inspires the world by her beauty materialised as the beauties of nature on earth. If the world concentrated on the terrestrial scenic beauties of the mountains and the valleys, of the oceans and the rivers, of north pole and south pole, the Mother would charm the world and infuse delight in it. She is very prominently in front in these earthly natural beauties that are specifically tuned to the human body and can act as the force of transformation if we try to feel the Mother's presence in them. Even the photographs that have snapped and mapped these scenic beauties can be an aid to the Integral Yoga in its bodily aspects. Beauty, a very powerful force of the Mother, is born from her Bliss

\*

Our faith must be anchored to the Mother. She is the basis for all we do, for all we are. Our wonderful and glorious future is stored in the Mother. She is our underlying principle—our foundation stone. We must therefore begin to become what she has chosen us to be. This is possible only if we entrust our lives fully to her in a state of self-giving.

\*

Any food offered to Sri Aurobindo's presence in the ambit of our heart becomes ambrosia for us.

\*

The Mother, in response to our consent, can confront every imperfection of ours to liquidate it in order that she may remodel all the parts of our being. She can also free our consciousness from confinement in the body.

\*

The Mother is the mystery that remains eternally concealed. What is revealed are only the waves from the triple ocean of light, love and bliss. The history of the past, present and future creations was, is, and will always be only a drop revealed from this concealed mystery of her boundless ocean.

\*

The Mother's are the willed harmonies that dissolve into pure delight for one and only one beneficiary of hers, namely, Sri Aurobindo, of whom we are parts.

\*

Even if we rise clean out of ignorance in our spiritual evolution upward, the ignorance, that is absence of knowledge, will never leave us. This is so because to evolve spiritually, endlessly, means to move into higher and higher realms of their 'Consciousness-climaxes' where we experience the knowledge of newer and newer patterns and curves of their Truth-Consciousness. Since Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have no final summits, however we progress into their unfoldments we shall always be ignorant about their remaining "mystic folds of light" that will constantly remain infinite, to be explored in endless time. Consequently we will always be infinitely ignorant about them in the context of what we will know in future about them in our endless progression. In this sense our ignorance will always be our incentive-partner driving us or inspiring us to know more and more about them, because after every wave of consciousness we realise, there will be still infinite waves of which we are ignorant. waiting their turns for exploration by us.

\*

The Mother is an infinite person who has emanated on earth as a Grace-

filled embodiment. She has done so because from earth, all around in endless space, she will gradually and endlessly expand her being in order to make creation spiritually oriented. She has not come to earth to become the latter's exclusively.

\*

Supreme knowledge is the effulgence of the Mother's mystic love that becomes visible as light.

\*

The Mother gave birth on the highest subtle plane to the "Truth-being" of the double-powered masculine-feminine form that will integrate in future the male and female aspects of each Supramental body although in outward appearance the continuity of the individual may remain as the constant of male or female. This "Truth-being" is symbolised in Indian iconology as "Hara-Gauri".

\*

The Mother is the channel through which Sri Aurobindo is eternally beginning in space and time, his beginnings have no end. All this play of his eternal, continuous, constant beginnings in space and time is actually the going abroad of the infinite being of the Mother. His eternal wisdom and will thereby unite his Lila with the Mother's Mahamaya. All space and time have extended from the infinite being of the Mother—in her role of Mahamaya. The union of Sri Aurobindo's Lila with the Mother's Mahamaya is the Self-Bliss of their love. This union on the overmental level has been named "Mahakali-Krishna".

\*

The Integral Yoga for most of us is a yoga of conviction because our acceptance of it is the result of our conviction that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are the Supreme. We have accepted this Yoga based on this conviction of ours that whatever our Divine Parents have said or written is the last word—an infallible Truth. We have accepted this Yoga irrespective of the fact that we may or may not have the realisation or experience. We strive to move in their direction by our faith in them. Consequently whenever we do not follow the central theme of doing everything from the point of view of Yoga, of Sadhana, of growing in the divine life in the Mother's consciousness, constantly, in every detail of our life, it amounts to allowing our convenience to overrule our conviction.

\*

The Mother's presence is mysteriously mingled and hidden in Sri Aurobindo's, and Sri Aurobindo's presence is the constituent of the Mother who mysteriously conceals him in her. But while this is so in their unearthly presences above, their presences in each other are not hidden in their embodiments because each one is present in the other's heart. The confusion, if it exists, as to whom to concentrate on, the Mother, or Sri Aurobindo, loses its validity in the light of the Supreme Spectrum that forms the images of each in the other's heart—the images that are blended and arranged in the truth of their incomprehensible radiations. The Mother is in our heart but the intensity of her presence in Sri Aurobindo's heart is infinite as much as the intensity of Sri Aurobindo's presence in the Mother's heart is boundless. For this reason whether we concentrate on him or her, we would always be concentrating on the one indivisible presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. They are indivisible in our heart but they respond in the image of him and her that we concentrate on. Sadhaks of the Integral Yoga have this vantage-point of eternity from which can come the love and wisdom supreme—the combined power that can dissolve that master of deception, our ego, which also is the master of distortion that misfocuses the love and projects it as a desire and an instinct to possess and monopolise.

JAGAT KAPADIA



## A PLUNGE INTO THE UNKNOWN

### ENCOUNTERS WITH THE UNEXPECTED

(15)

My main purpose in writing these reminiscences is to provide some materials to the future historians of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and life in the Ashram. Both subjective and objective experiences may be valuable in this respect, coming directly from the pen of a sadhak who had those experiences.

I was much surprised when I came to learn from a report by the Mother that most of the ashramites who had been here for very many years, some of whom were very big sadhaks, were not aware of the supramental manifestation! I never spoke or wrote to the Mother of my own experiences of that period, only a silent message was exchanged between us through our eyes, on 1.4.56 during the Prosperity Darshan. No question of taking credit or indulging in self-praise—I am only speaking the bare truth in the name of the Supreme Lord and the Divine Mother. They alone can judge me. I am open to Their judgement and am ready to face the consequences.

A historic event that took place in the Ashram on 3.4.56 was a demonstration by some Soviet gymnasts—, a breathtaking show of gymnastics. This was a symbol of collaboration between the most materialistic country of the world, Soviet Russia, with the most spiritual country of the world, India, in the institution which was created by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother upon the earth to combine matter and spirit for the ultimate goal of humanity. The significance of this event was most aptly expressed by the Mother herself—“... We feel sure that today one step more is taken towards unity of the great human family.” But our human mind is such that after having a most beautiful spiritual experience, it goes on doubting. On 24.4.56 during Darshan the Mother distributed the following message.

The manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a living fact, a reality.

It is at work here, and one day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious, even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognise it.

Even after receiving and understanding the import of this message, sometimes my mind was overcome with despair and despondency. In one such moment, while I was doing pranam at the Samadhi, I had a brilliant vision. I saw a beautiful building standing majestically in the backdrop of a refreshingly blue sky where a dazzling sun was shining with a royal splendour and glorious beauty. In front of the house there was a green lawn on which a peacock with outspread

plumes stood in a victorious posture. Victory is the spiritual significance of the peacock. The victory I aspired for in my poem written in 1953 had come—this was the significance of my vision. To express my state of mind I wrote the following piece in rhythmic prose:

It is morn indeed but a winter morn!

The long spell of nocturnal hours is past.

The sun is up there on the snow-crest mountain leaning on the azure sky like a king on his throne.

The vast verdant meadow with sparkling dew-drops presents a picture of boundless joy, life being touched by the sun of Truth.

I peep through my blanket a little—Oh! all is light and delight over there; but I fight shy of the cold and cling to the comfort and safety of my bed—which is my ego

Through the window slips in a gold-green invitation card asking me to join the fête. It rushes upon my soul with the entrancing charm and power of Krishna's flute.

Still I move not and cling to the comfort of my cosy bed.

The Voice speaks again

Fear not the north-wind; come out in the open and enjoy the golden warmth of the sun. Cast off the black blanket of thy ego and dare the first touch of helplessness on thy bare nerves. Then the sun will bring thee his wonderful gifts

Fear not to gain all by losing all.

Another realisation came to my mind which I put down in another piece drawing an analogy from the rock and the beach:

The army of rushing waves attacks the rock.

The rock resists and repels the onslaught.

The surging waves return with forces renewed and break upon the rock with the fury of a deluge.

The rock stands still unyielding

Thus, against the resistance of the rock, relentless is the hammering of the waves. And a time comes when the rock gives way and falls tumbling down into the upsurging waters.

The beach, on the contrary, bends its head low in a happy submission and extends to the waves its smiling and cordial hospitality.

The fury of the waves melts in a trice. What remains is an embrace of intimate playmates and a happy white laughter.

The rock is our ego with its rigidity and arrogance against the forces divine and, as a consequence, suffers an ignominious defeat.

The beach is our psychic being, our inmost soul, which knows how to submit to the Divine's errand and to surrender to His loving command—and gains all through this surrender

Now, a poem with a similar theme, which was published in *Mother India* a few years back is published herewith for the benefit of new readers:

### To Die to Ego

I saw a greatness within me,  
 But that greatness I did not become,  
 Only I tried to exploit it to my smaller self's end,  
 And smaller still I became though great I feigned.

At last I have found this secret, O Lord!  
 It is to give myself to that greatness and lose my all,  
 To be possessed by That which I sought to possess  
 And merge my frontiers in Its global embrace

As the fuel fulfils itself in the flaming fire,  
 As a stream bequeaths its rights to the Ocean vast,  
 As a rocket spends itself to send the satellite higher,  
 I would spend myself to relive in Self and everlast.

Amal Kiran's comment on this poem

Very successful. There's an apt intuitive touch almost everywhere

In 1955 I wrote a Bengali song on the Supramental Descent. The river Padma is a very destructive river in East Bengal, now politically called Bangladesh. The Supermind is equally destructive to the human ego and its thousands of falsehoods. I drew an analogy between the two and addressed the Supermind thus (adaptation in simple prose).

O my golden Padma, my darling Padma, thou shatterest my home. Thy golden waters rush in a deluge overpowering the resistance of my banks.

Thy hammering waves destroy the crops of my fields which I produced with so much care and labour. All the riches that I kept hidden in my chests are being looted mercilessly by thy powerful hands. For thou claimest all that belongs to me as thine own.

With the rhythm of this destruction, which is nothing but the destruc-

tion of my ego, leap up flames of rapturous delight in my blood; the pain of my heart is transformed into an entrancing ecstasy; while being carried off by thy ruthless currents, I dream only of a golden promised land as my final refuge

All these are my unexpected encounters with the Unknown. On 15 August, 1956, the Mother distributed during Darshan a coloured picture of the flower which she had named “Supramental Manifestation” as her message. On the same day I wrote a Bengali song addressing Sri Aurobindo. Here is an adaptation in English:

### We the Army of Thy Light

In our hearts burn ceaselessly the flames of adoration and worship. We are Thy flame-sentinels in the darkness of Inconscience.

In our earthly bodies burns the inextinguishable mystic fire, hidden in our depths, illumining the night of Nescience.

We are the lamps of Thy Love; we are the torches of Thy Knowledge; we are the messengers of Thy immortal Light in the dense gloom of the human mind.

Even as the suns and the stars we carry the mission of Thy eternal Effulgence. We are the tiny flames of Thy Supramental Sun.

We, with our lives, write a new Mahabharata in this New Dawn of the New Age

When the Light descends from above, the forces of Darkness rise in revolt. This happened not only in the lives of sadhaks but also in the external life of the Ashram. Some labourers in a number of departments of the Ashram were retrenched for their indiscipline. Under the instigation of a political party they resorted to a sit-down strike in front of the Ashram. The Mother asked the ashramites to keep cool and not to pay attention to them. For days together this drama went on.

On 11.10.56, Mahashtami, the Mother distributed the following message of Sri Aurobindo:

Self-surrender to the divine and infinite Mother, however difficult, remains our only effective means and our sole abiding refuge,—self-surrender to her means that our nature must be an instrument in her hands, the soul a child in the arms of the Mother.

On 30.10.56, Vijayadashami, a quotation from *Savitri* was distributed—the last line being:

A camp of God is pitched in human time.

Indeed, the supramental manifestation is a camp of God in this ungodly world. Then on 19.10.56, Lakshmipuja, the following message from Sri Aurobindo's pen came from the Mother's hand:

I am the inviolable ecstasy  
They who have looked on me shall grieve no more.

On 2 11 56, Mahakalipuja, another quotation from Savitri:

Thou hast come down into a struggling world  
To aid a blind and suffering mortal race,  
To open to Light the eyes that could not see,  
To bring down bliss into the heart of grief.  
To make thy life a bridge twixt earth and heaven...

Then on 24 11 56, Siddhi Day, came a message of Victory and encouragement in a printed facsimile of the Mother's handwriting:

Without care for time, without fear for space, surging out purified from the flames of the ordeal, we shall fly without stop towards the realisation of our goal, the supramental victory.

I may mention here that the sit-down strike was called off a day before Lakshmipuja. So it was a real victory, in every sense of the term.

On 1st December, the Mother's newly written drama, *The Ascent to Truth*, was staged in the Ashram Theatre which had been newly built. The Ashram artists co-operated to paint various background scenes for the drama. The drama was crowned with success. I still remember the thrills in my body when the two aspirants stood on the top of the mountain in the full Supramental light. It was a golden end. Needless to say, the Mother herself was the director and was present in the theatre during the performance.

1956 was not merely the historic year when the supramental manifestation took place—this extraordinary event is not even recorded in modern history—its scope is far beyond human history. The future will tell the whole story in its own time. This extremely extraordinary event involves not only our little earth but the whole universe. However, for the moment, let us turn our eyes to the living present and to our little Ashram.

After the passing of the Mother we have been facing many a problem in our Ashram-life. After Sri Aurobindo there was the Mother, his Shakti. But after

the Mother there was none to guide us spiritually.

The earliest Vedic age is called the age of *śruti*—the age of direct revelation. It was followed by the age of *smṛti*—the age of remembrance. People remembered what had happened in the preceding age and tried to carry on their lives as best they could. Let us remember here Sri Aurobindo's message 'The Hour of God'—"There are moments when the Spirit moves among men and the breath of the Lord is abroad upon the waters of our being. There are others when It retires and men are left to act in the strength or the weakness of their own egoism."

In the very year we are dealing with, i.e., 1956, on 18 January, in the evening class at the Ashram Playground, somebody questions the Mother whether the Divine will choose only one person to manifest Him out of all those who do yoga. Here is the answer of the Mother:

is it only one individual the Divine chooses to manifest Him or can He choose several?—He chooses several.

But here too there is a hierarchy. One can understand *nothing* of the spiritual life if one does not understand the true hierarchy.

Nowadays it's not in fashion. It is something which human thought doesn't favour at all. But from the spiritual point of view, it is automatic, spontaneous and indisputable. And so, if the hierarchy is true, there is a place for everybody, and for each individual in his own place, his individual truth is absolute. That is to say, each element that is truly in its place has a total and perfect relation with the Divine—in its place. And yet, on the whole, there is a hierarchy which too is quite absolute. But to understand spiritual life one must first understand that and it isn't very easy.

Everyone can be a perfect expression of the Divine in himself, on condition that he knows his place and keeps to it.

(To be continued)

ABANI SINHA

## ARRIVAL OF THE DAY

Out of the incognito sleep  
Lotus-buds bloom next morning  
Carrying in their worshipful heart  
Water of the pond for ritual oblations  
And in their sparkling pink-white  
Incense offering to the rising deity  
They had gathered  
All the scattered phases of the moon  
And the unknown moods of its other side too,  
Through wind and storm  
And through battles fought in ancient valleys  
Even as history straddled on dangerous paths  
Rarely holding the sword of heroic triumph  
They had seen a thousand yearnings  
Float around the stalks  
Working out a surer intimacy  
That could speak of unfragmented time  
The trees were not exactly dreaming  
And the birds were still in silent activity  
When the placid moment was stirred ,  
By the imaginative kingfisher  
Suddenly skimming over the miraculous pond  
To seize those thousand images  
Of the amazed intrepid  
Cherished wonders have awoken  
And now from the lotus-pond flames out  
Unhesitant supremacy of the day

R. Y. DESHPANDE

## LOVE'S PRAYER

BECAUSE the Hour is near as the world grows dark  
the all-saving Light comes close,  
Because all that's asleep needs to be roused,  
that which is wrong made good—  
Because all would be lost if rescue would be far,  
the brave, the ready perish, if not uplifted at last,  
Because cries fill the void, which was made for joy, and  
all that suffers, withers and dies, have asked  
for eternal Life—  
Sealed be forever the terrible Pit, and Darkness  
return to Light!  
O Maker of Worlds, Destroying Might, All-Knowing Delight!  
give to man of your strength,  
for his tired heart your hope,  
to fill the dreadful hour when all will be dark  
and Light conceals its face  
Let the redeeming stroke be swift, merciful—  
the healing balm not slow to come,  
Let all tears and cries turn to a smile—  
misery, to Bliss, I pray!  
I too am Man, knower of desolate times, large ordeals,  
a multitude of pains—  
I too am God, one and many, ever returning, ever sent forth,  
my prayers uttered from the lotus of the heart—  
render my arms quick to strike, tender to save.  
I bow to the Plan, the Will and the Deed  
and offer my triple-twined garland  
at Your feet

GEORGETTE COTY



## A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

### 88. THE INVALUABLE LOINCLOTH

PAZHAYARAI, an affluent city in the Chozha kingdom, lured many a needy man, for its merchants were very generous at heart

Amar Needhiyar, a successful merchant, was the most honoured man in his community and his word was law. A firm believer in Saivism, he provided free food and loincloths to all the Saivite mendicants. A crowd of such people was always seen in and around his house.

Once Amar Needhiyar was surprised to see a strange Saivite mendicant at his door. He was surprised because the mendicant looked different from the others in his physical form and had a heavenly glow on his face. Stripes of holy ash adorned his brow and limbs. His loincloth was so shiny that Amar Needhiyar wondered what material it was made of. He held in his hand a staff at one end of which were tied two such pieces of loincloth.

"I've never seen you before. But your presence makes my heart jump for joy. Please come in and let me have the pleasure of serving you food," said Amar Needhiyar.

"I've come a long way to see you. First let me bathe in the River Kavari," said the strange mendicant. He then tugged at one of the two pieces of loincloth tied to the staff and it came off in his hand. Passing it on to Amar Needhiyar, he said: "Keep this with you till I come back. After the bath, I'll have to change my loincloth. Suppose it rains, this loincloth also will get wet and I may need a dry one to change. So keep it safe."

Amar Needhiyar carried it to his room and kept it in a cupboard.

The mendicant returned after a while, dripping from head to toe. The other loincloth remained tied to the staff. "Huh! What a downpour! It's good that I have left one piece of loincloth with you. What would I wear if that too got drenched!"

"Well! I would have given you a new loincloth," responded Amar Needhiyar.

"My loincloth is very special. Your hundred pieces of loincloth that you give away every day are in no way equal to mine," said the mendicant and laughed. "Now get me back the loincloth I had given you."

Amar Needhiyar went into his room and opened the cupboard. The mendicant's loincloth had surprisingly vanished. He became panicky. He ransacked the whole cupboard but failed to find it. He searched the whole room but couldn't find it. "Get me back my loincloth... Be quick." He heard the mendicant shout.

Amar Needhiyar, his face laden with shock and sorrow, emerged out of his room. "Missing. I wonder where it could have gone," he said.

The mendicant stared hard at him and said: "It's a lie. You have coveted my loincloth for you know that it is made of a different stuff unknown to mankind I'll neither take food in your abode nor leave this place till you return my loincloth "

"Don't misunderstand me I never told a lie in my life .. Believe me I do not know how your loincloth vanished from the cupboard in my room But I'll compensate for your loss Tell me a way out," pleaded Amar Needhiyar

The mendicant laughed again and said: "I think there is some truth in what you say. And so give me loincloths equalling the weight of the one that remains tied to the staff." He pulled off the wet loincloth and gave it to Amar Needhiyar.

Amar Needhiyar ordered a huge balance to be brought in He then placed the wet loincloth on the left pan and placed a few pieces of new loincloth on the right. The left pan hardly moved. Amar Needhiyar placed a few more and then a few more and then a few more .. The left pan remained undisturbed

He then placed the whole lot of loincloths kept to be given away to the Saivite mendicants But there was no change in the left pan of the balance

The mendicant laughed to his heart's content and then said. "If you have exhausted all the pieces of loincloth, then place anything you would like to part with for the welfare of the Saivites "

Amar Needhiyar ordered his wife and son to fetch all the cloths in the house and dump them on the left pan. It was done immediately. But to the surprise of everyone gathered there the left pan didn't tilt at all

"Bring all the jewels and gold coins and place them on the pan," said Amar Needhiyar His wife and son did as commanded But it was no use.

Disappointed, Amar Needhiyar said to the mendicant: "I have nothing to give . I am a pauper now Please take all that I have given you and pardon my inability to compensate for your loss "

The mendicant heckled Amar Needhiyar and said sarcastically, "Is that all you can give?"

"Yes! I am left with nothing."

"Are you sure? Is that all you can give to a Saivite mendicant?"

The mendicant's words gave a different meaning now and Amar Needhiyar bucked up He said jubilantly, "Yes! I've something more to offer you " He then asked his wife and son to step onto the pan of the balance They did The left pan tilted and slowly moved up, thereby bringing the right pan a little down. But yet .

Amar Needhiyar uttering the name of Lord Siva stepped onto the left pan. He-ho! The pans balanced out

The mendicant laughed again But this time it was not a villainous laugh

Amar Needhiyar, his wife and their son were surprised to see the pan on which they stood disjoining itself from the hook and moving heavenward. The mendicant was directing the pan As they moved above the clouds, the mendicant disappeared and in his place stood Lord Siva Himself.

## 89. THE SAINT WITH A HATCHET

To every mischiefmonger in Karuvloor (one among the four chief cities of the Chozha empire) Eripattha Nayanar was a terror. The mention of his name was enough to silence all those who spoke ill of Lord Siva and his followers. And none in the city ever dared to harm the Saivites for fear of facing his wrath.

Eripattha Nayanar, with his shaved head and holy-ash-smeared body resembled a sadhu. But what distinguished him from the other sadhus was the hatchet he always carried in his hand. Since everyone was scared of his hatchet, he found little opportunity to use it.

One morning, Eripattha Nayanar was marching along a street when he found an old brahmin lying face down in the dust and struggling in vain to raise himself, all the time muttering the several names of Lord Siva. A flower-basket made of palmyra fronds was lying a little away from him and lovely hued flowers emanating their sweet scent were lying pell-mell.

Eripattha Nayanar rushed to the spot and helped the old man to get up. He dusted dirt off his chest and dhoti, and asked him what had happened.

The old brahmin was Sivakamiyandar. A faithful follower of Lord Siva, he spent the evening of his life in gathering sweet-smelling flowers to be offered to the Divine at Thiruaanilai, the temple of Lord Siva at Karuvloor. On that day too he was on his way to the temple with his basketful of flowers when the royal elephant of King Chozhan, ambling in glee, brushed aside the old brahmin with its mischievous trunk.

The old man lost his balance and his basketful of flowers was thrown in the air. "It's that elephant... It's that elephant that has rendered all these flowers useless. How painstakingly I had collected them, you know! Now they have all fallen on the sand and gathered dust," moaned the old brahmin. Gritting his teeth he grumbled, "If only I could catch that brute."

Eripattha Nayanar didn't wait a single second and ran in search of the mischievous elephant. In the eyes of his law, anyone—be it man or beast—who insults or harms a Saivite deserves to be punished with his hatchet.

He found the elephant in an adjacent street. Raising his hatchet above his head, he rushed towards the animal, as if he had sighted the worst enemy he had been long searching for. Jumping as high as he could in front of the animal, he brought his hatchet down with such an asuric force on its trunk that the trunk fell many feet away from the animal.

The animal fell down with a great thud and with it the two mahouts seated on it.

The mahouts raised their fists against Eripattha Nayanar, who in turn hacked them to death. The mutilated animal bled profusely and died.

The killing of the royal elephant and its mahouts was brought to the ears of the king and he hastened to the spot to see the killer and punish him.

“Who killed my elephant?” roared the angry king

“Your majesty! The royal elephant was the pride of our empire. Your formidable foes too shivered at its presence and took to their heels. But this Saivite sadhu, a dare-devil, has killed the elephant,” said a king’s man.

The king looked at Eripattha Nayanar. Unable to believe his ears and eyes, he shook his head and said: “Who? Eripattha Nayanar! Can’t be. He is the very embodiment of peace and discipline. If he is the killer, then I would blame only the elephant for driving him to use his hatchet. Now tell me, O Saint! your side of the story. My men have told me what they have seen and I would like to know what they have not seen.”

Eripattha Nayanar related the whole story.

The king gave him a captive audience. He then bent down his head in shame and said, “My elephant deserved death for insulting a Saivite old brahmin. The two mahouts too deserved death for their dereliction of duty—they have failed to control the animal they were in charge of. But you have left out their chief who too deserves punishment for honouring an unruly elephant and paying its careless mahouts. He deserves death.”

While everyone was wondering who the king was referring to, he pulled out his sword and giving it to Eripattha Nayanar, said, “Kill me.. Let me die for my carelessness by my own sword.”

Eripattha Nayanar took the sword from the king. The king bent down his head and waited for the sword to fall on his neck.

“It such is the love you have for the Saivites, then your life is more precious than mine,” so saying Eripattha Nayanar began to cut his own neck.

The king in an attempt to stop him from cutting further held his hand. But Eripattha Nayanar tried to push the king aside. A tug-of-war began between the king and the saint.

But the ‘war’ came to an end when they heard a voice from the clouds. “It’s all the play of the Lord. It’s only to make it known to the world the love Sivakamiyandar, Eripattha Nayanar and the king have for the Divine; Lord Siva Himself had prodded the elephant and the mahouts to behave in such a funny fashion.”

The king and Eripattha Nayanar hugged and begged for each other’s pardon. They saw the mutilated trunk move towards the animal and join its parent part. The elephant sprang to life. So did the mahouts.

## 90. THE STRANGE GIFT

“Go to Poompuhar and seek the help of Earpakaiyar, the broad-minded. You’ll get anything just for the asking. He is an affluent merchant and gladly parts with anything a Saivite asks for,” said one Saivite to another.

“You mean Earpakaiyar will give anything that we Saivites ask for?” asked the latter with a wink.

“Yes. Go and try your luck.”

Lord Siva, who happened to overhear the conversation of the two needy Saivites, decided to test the truth of the matter and to make Earpakaiyar known to the world if found true to the report.

Disguised as a well-built Saivite brahmin, Lord Siva went to seek the help of Earpakaiyar

“What can I do for you, O follower of Lord Siva?” asked Earpakaiyar.

“I am told that you give anything the Saivites ask for. And so I am here to ask you. ”, hesitatingly said the brahmin

“Do not hesitate .. Ask anything and it shall be given without a second thought.”

“What if you go back on your word?”

“Never. To me a promise is a promise. I’ll give you my life if you ask for it.”

“May I have your wife?”

Earpakaiyar felt a tremor down his spine and his wife stood stunned.

“I have come all the way to take away your beautiful wife. Keep your word.”

“Take her,” said Earpakaiyar to the shock of his wife. “What else do you need from me?”

“What if your wife refuses to go with me, and your friends or relatives injure me? And so I would like you to escort me and your wife till we cross your county boundary ”

“I will... My affectionate wife will not speak a word against my decision And whoever stops you or harms you will be slain by my sword,” said Earpakaiyar drawing his sword

The brahmin ogled at the beautiful wife of Earpakaiyar. He saw gloom overshadowing her bright face Her eyes looked like a well of tears

“Go with him, my love Lord Siva is great. It’s all for the good We have to wait and watch,” said Earpakaiyar to his wife

She brushed aside her trickling tears and obeyed her husband’s words

The brahmin held her by her arm jingling with golden bangles and began to walk past Earpakaiyar saying, “Be our escort.”

With the naked sword in his hand, Earpakaiyar escorted his wife and the Saivite brahmin But before they could cover half the distance, they were stopped by a mob armed with swords.

“Don’t you have any sense of shame? You are a curse to our merchant community,” howled one in the mob

“No man in his right senses would give away his wife to another man. This fellow must be crazy.” said another.

“This madcap may send his wife away with a brahmin. But it is our duty to

stop the brahmin from carrying away a chaste married woman from our community,” roared the mob, raising their swords above their heads and preparing to pounce on the brahmin

The brahmin began to sweat. His eyes betrayed fear and his body trembled

“Do not fear, O brahmin! My husband will put the entire mob to flight if he brandishes his sword,” said the lady, instilling courage and hope into his chicken heart.

The words of his wife pepped Earpakaiyar up and he cautioned the mob to run away before he could wield his sword in their direction

“Shame on you Shame on you,” reiterated the angry mob, as a few among them emboldened themselves to attack the brahmin

The brahmin shouted for help

Earpakaiyar single-handedly braved the angry mob Heads began to roll off and maimed bodies writhed in pain When he had slain everyone of them, he escorted the couple

When they reached the boundary, the brahmin said, “Thank you for keeping your word Now you can go ”

Earpakaiyar looked at his parting wife with a heavy heart, turned back and moved on

The brahmin watched Earpakaiyar go without even turning back once and applauded his love for the Saivites and his faith in Lord Siva

All of a sudden the brahmin raised an alarm to attract the attention of Earpakaiyar

Earpakaiyar turned back and sensing some danger afoot, ran towards the brahmin But only his wife stood there. His eyes searched for the brahmin So did his wife’s But where did the brahmin go?

“I’m here Raise your eyes heavenward,” they heard a voice

Earpakaiyar and his wife had a vision of Lord Siva and his consort

“It was just a test You are true to your words I am pleased with the love you have for me and my followers You are welcome to join us in my abode with your dutiful wife,” said Lord Siva and disappeared

The dead who had already been infused with life witnessed the miracle of Earpakaiyar and his wife entering the heavenly abode of Lord Siva

From that day on, they found delight in narrating the tale of the generous-minded Earpakaiyar to all those interested in Lord Siva and the ordeals His devotees had undergone

*(More legends on the way)*

## *Students' Section*

### THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Eightieth Seminar

25 February 1996

#### INSIGHTS INTO THE VISION AND WORK OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

*WHAT IS NEW IN SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA AND WHY IS IT CALLED  
AN ADVENTURE?*

Speech by Arvind Akki

FOR all aspiring souls, the vision and work of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo can provide innumerable insights. But the one insight that has impressed me most is the new or unique character of their Yoga which they have said is an adventure. So I will deal with this topic in my speech at this seminar.

These days, there are many misconceptions about what Yoga is. People in the modern world, especially in Europe, associate Yoga with Asanas and Pranayama exercises. So it is better to clarify what Yoga is in its essential sense before we try to understand what is new in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. Sri Aurobindo says that Pranayama and Asanas, like concentration, worship, ceremonies, religious practices, are not themselves Yoga but only a means towards Yoga. Yoga in its true sense is the union with the Divine by Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga, Jnanayoga or any other path that helps one to realise this union. "The common initial purpose of all Yoga," explains Sri Aurobindo, "is the liberation of the soul of man from its present natural ignorance and limitation, its release into spiritual being, its union with the highest self and Divinity."<sup>1</sup>

Yoga, understood in this essential sense, is nothing but a history of the evolution of consciousness. But to lead this upward progress of evolution at the crucial periods, the manifestation of Avatars into this terrestrial world is of paramount importance. The Hindu procession of ten Avatars is called by Sri Aurobindo, "a parable of evolution", and he stresses that, "The progression is striking and unmistakable."<sup>2</sup>

Both the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have played a significant and crucial role in the evolution of consciousness on earth. And not only at the present juncture but in the past also they have been carrying on the evolution under one form or another. In this context I quote here a few lines from Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri* revealing their role as Avatars for the earthly evolution:

“To raise the world to God in deathless Light,  
To bring God down to the world on earth we came,  
To change the earthly life to life divine ”

The problems of human destiny have preoccupied the minds of the thinkers, poets, writers, scientists, philosophers and yogis throughout the ages. A ceaseless inquiry has been made by them to know the reality behind the phenomena, the unknown mysteries of life and nature and worlds beyond. All these have been the perennial and restless quest of humanity. Although so much progress has been made in the field of science and technology and in other fields of human activities, still the fundamental problems of human existence have been eluding man. These problems are summed up explicitly by the Mother:

“Why is one born if only to die?     •  
Why does one live if only to suffer?  
Why does one love if only to be separated?  
Why does one think if only to err?  
Why does one act if only to make mistakes?”<sup>4</sup>

Many spiritual and religious systems have tried to give solutions to these burning problems. But their efforts have had at the best only a partial and temporary success. For religion itself is a limitation, as it seizes only one side of the Truth. Undoubtedly, each religion has contributed something to man's aspiration for Truth, but none has been able to spiritualise mankind. Sri Aurobindo recognises each religion's contribution to the upliftment of mankind. This is how he beautifully sums up: “Each religion has helped mankind. Paganism increased in man the light of beauty, the largeness and height of his life, his aim at a many-sided perfection; Christianity gave him some vision of divine love and charity; Buddhism has shown him a noble way to be wiser, gentler, purer, Judaism and Islam how to be religiously faithful in action and zealously devoted to God; Hinduism has opened to him the largest and profoundest spiritual possibilities. A great thing would be done if all these God-visions could embrace and cast themselves into each other, but intellectual dogma and cult-egoism stand in the way ”

According to the Mother, at the present stage of evolution, “The time of religions is over. We have entered the age of universal spirituality, of spiritual experience in its initial purity ”<sup>6</sup> She also warns us. “A new religion would not only be useless but harmful ”<sup>7</sup> Now the time has come for man to abandon the old creeds and plunge into the great adventure of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. Here a word of caution is necessary, for many people think that Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is a new religion. Those who think that way are making a very big blunder. Sri Aurobindo himself has made things very clear. “It is not his object to develop



any one religion or to amalgamate the older religions or to found any new religion—for any of these things would lead away from his central purpose.”<sup>8</sup> And further he elucidates the central aim of his Yoga: “The one aim of his Yoga is an inner self-development by which each one who follows it can in time discover the One Self in all and evolve a higher consciousness than the mental, a spiritual and supramental consciousness which will transform and divinise human nature.”<sup>9</sup>

Most of the traditional methods of Yoga and different schools of philosophy believe that the world is a creation or projection of God himself. But if all is God’s creation then why are there so many contradictions in it of His true Nature? Why is there death if God is immortal? Why is there suffering if God is all bliss? Why is there hatred if He is all love? Why is there ignorance if He is all knowledge? In ordinary life, the forces of the lower Nature and anti-divine forces blind us by means of ego, desires, impulses and ignorance. All these things hinder us from realising the Divine straight away.

Because of this the tendencies and the aims of all the traditional Yogas were to separate from the life on earth and to ascend into some spiritual plane of consciousness and remain there merged with the Divine, thus rejecting life and its multifarious activities

Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga does not reject altogether the aims and methods of the other systems of Yoga. Also it is not a repetition of old Yogas. Sri Aurobindo does not assert that his Yoga is totally new. He states the aim of his own Yoga very precisely: “I have never said that my Yoga was something brand new in all its elements. I have called it the integral Yoga and that means that it takes up the essence and many processes of the old Yogas—its newness is in its aim, standpoint and the totality of its method.”<sup>10</sup>

Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga does not reject mind, body and life. His Yoga accepts life in its multifarious activities. As he says, “This Yoga accepts the value of cosmic existence and holds it to be a reality; its object is to enter into a higher Truth-Consciousness or Divine Supramental Consciousness in which action and creation are the expression not of ignorance and imperfection, but of the Truth, the Light, the Divine Ananda.”<sup>11</sup>

One may ask what is new in Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga as compared to the traditional Yogas. The Master illumines us with these points:

“It is new as compared with the old Yogas:

- 1) Because it aims not at a departure out of world and life into Heaven or Nirvana, but at a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate or incidental, but as a distinct and central object. If there is a descent in other Yogas, yet it is only an incident on the way or resulting from the ascent—the ascent is the real thing. Here the ascent is the first step, but it is a means for the descent. It is the descent of the new consciousness attained by the ascent that is the stamp and seal of the sadhana. Even the Tantra and Vaishnavism end in the

release from life, here the object is the divine fulfilment of life

2) Because the object sought after is not an individual achievement of divine realisation for the sake of the individual, but something to be gained for the earth-consciousness here, a cosmic, not solely a supracosmic achievement. The thing to be gained also is the bringing in of a Power of Consciousness (the supramental) not yet organised or active directly in earth-nature, even in the spiritual life, but yet to be organised and made directly active

3) Because a method has been preconized for achieving this purpose which is as total and integral as the aim set before it, viz., the total and integral change of the consciousness and nature, taking up old methods but only as a part action and present aid to others that are distinctive. I have not found this method (as a whole) or anything like it professed or realised in the old yogas. If I had, I would not have wasted my time in hewing out a road in thirty years of search and inner creation when I could have hastened home safely to my goal in an easy canter over paths already blazed out, laid down, perfectly mapped, macadamised, made secure and public. Our yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure."<sup>12</sup>

This quotation makes very clear what is new in Sri Aurobindo's integral Yoga. After so many years of Herculean toil both by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, the Supermind manifested in the subtle-physical layer of the earth on February 29, 1956, a most significant day in the annals of the spiritual evolution of the world. This is the first time in the evolutionary history of consciousness that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have declared that a complete transformation of human nature down to the very physical substance can be realised. This was considered to be absolutely impossible and therefore denied by all the previous traditional Yogas.

It is thus quite evident that in the traditional Yogas there was only the ascent into the spiritual domain, whereas in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga the ascent is only a means for the descent. Therefore Sri Aurobindo once said that his Yoga begins where the other Yogas end. That is to say, Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is a two-way process of ascent and descent. He wants to bring down the Supramental consciousness from above and establish the divine life on earth by transforming mind, life and body.

In one of the New Age Association seminars the topic chosen was, "Why is our Yoga an adventure?" To this the Mother answered, "It can be called an adventure because it is the first time that a yoga aims at transformation and divinisation of physical life instead of escape from it."<sup>13</sup>

How to start on this adventure of Yoga? What are the steps to be taken? According to Sri Aurobindo, "The sadhana of this yoga does not proceed through any set mental teaching or prescribed forms of meditation, Mantras or others, but by aspiration, by a self-concentration inwards or upwards, by self-opening to an Influence, to the Divine Power above us and its workings, to the

Divine Presence in the heart and by the rejection of all that is foreign to these things. It is only by faith, aspiration and surrender that this self-opening can come.”<sup>14</sup>

This Yoga can only be followed by those who have a spirit of adventure and an opening to the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s Force and an inner call. If we love adventure, here is a message from the Mother: “It is not a question of repeating spiritually what others have done before us, for our adventure begins beyond that. It is a question of a new creation, entirely new, with all the unforeseen events, the risks, the hazards it entails—a *real adventure*, whose goal is certain victory, but the road to which is unknown and must be traced out step by step in the unexplored. Something that has never been in the present universe and that will *never* be again in the same way. If that interests you .. well, let us embark.”<sup>15</sup>

Last year, we celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the Mother’s final arrival in Pondicherry (1920-1995), and this month on 21st February we are commemorating the 118th birth anniversary of the Mother and on 29th February the Golden Day. Let us be worthy of these celebrations by becoming fit instruments of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Years are rolling fast and soon we will be entering into the dawn of the 21st century. Let us partake in this great spiritual adventure in all sincerity and earnestness as fearless warriors—as the Mother’s children.

Friends, I would like to conclude my speech with a passage from Sri Aurobindo which gives us the supreme assurance of reaching the goal of the great spiritual adventure of integral Yoga. He says, “The more complete your faith, sincerity and surrender, the more will grace and protection be with you. And when the grace and protection of the Divine Mother are with you, what is there that can touch you or whom need you fear? A little of it even will carry you through all difficulties, obstacles and dangers; surrounded by its full presence you can go securely on your way because it is hers, careless of all menace, unaffected by any hostility however powerful, whether from this world or from worlds invisible. Its touch can turn difficulties into opportunities, failure into success and weakness into unfaltering strength. For the grace of the Divine Mother is the sanction of the Supreme and now or tomorrow its effect is sure, a thing decreed, inevitable and irresistible.”<sup>16</sup>

### References

- 1 *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 21), p. 587
- 2 *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 22), p. 402
- 3 *Savitri* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 29), p. 692
- 4 *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 12), p. 99
- 5 *Thoughts and Glimpses* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 16), p. 394
- 6 *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 15), p. 32

- 7 *Ibid* , Vol 3, p 76
- 8 *On Himself* (Cent Ed , Vol 26), p 97
- 9 *Ibid*
- 10 *Ibid* , pp 107-8
- 11 *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 22), p 41
- 12 *Ibid* , pp 100-101
- 13 *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent Ed , Vol 12), p 310
- 14 *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 23), p 505
- 15 *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent Ed , Vol 9), pp 150-51
- 16 *The Mother* (Cent Ed , Vol 25) p 10